

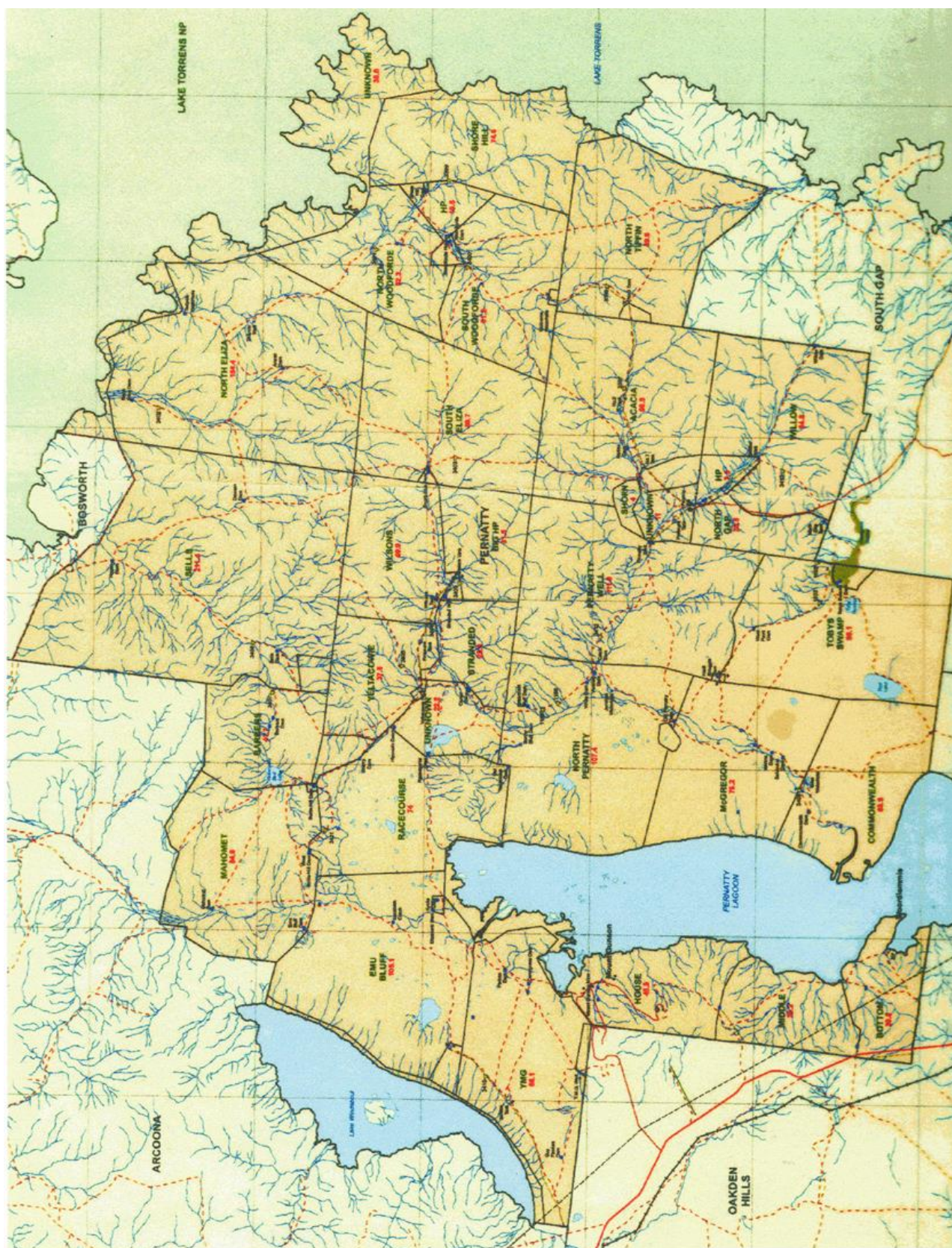


Pernatty: Halcyon Days and Difficult Times
The story of Agnes and Walter French.
1927-1961
by
Beth French



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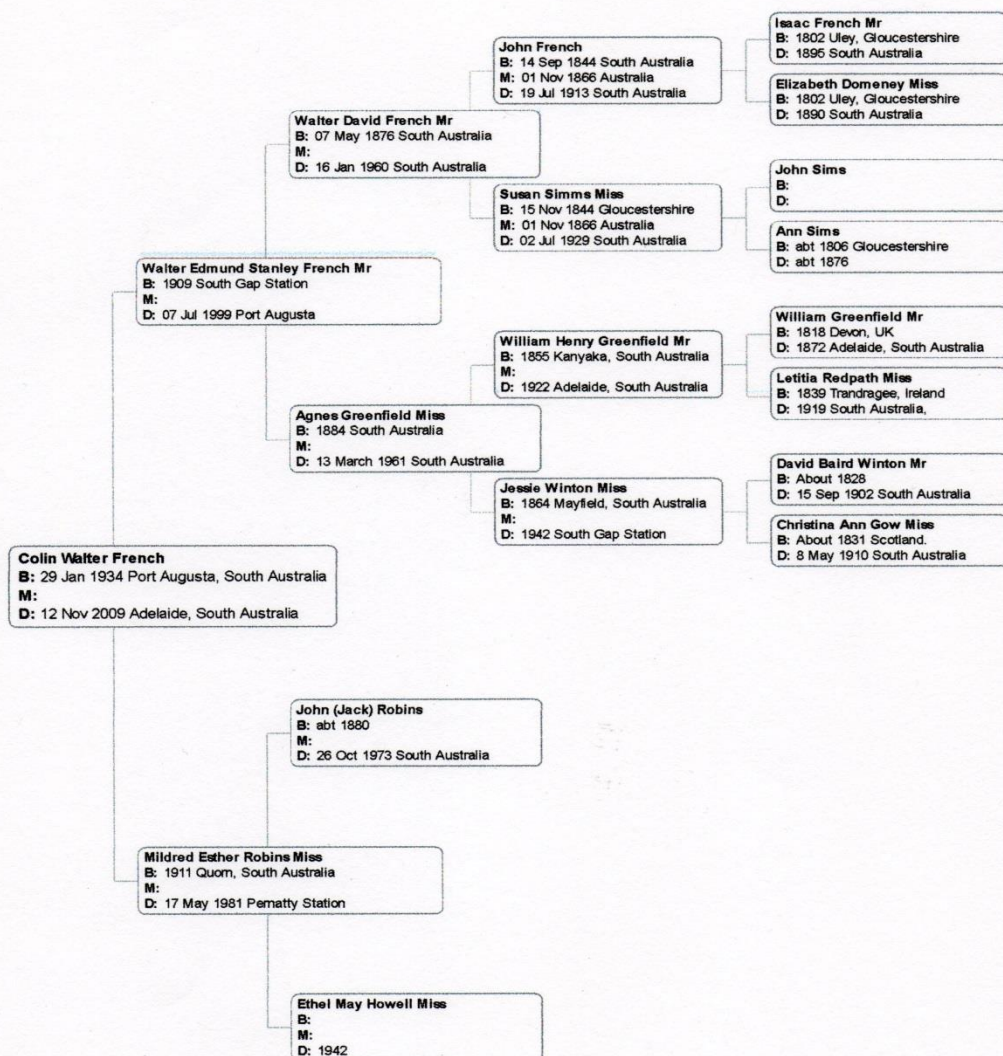
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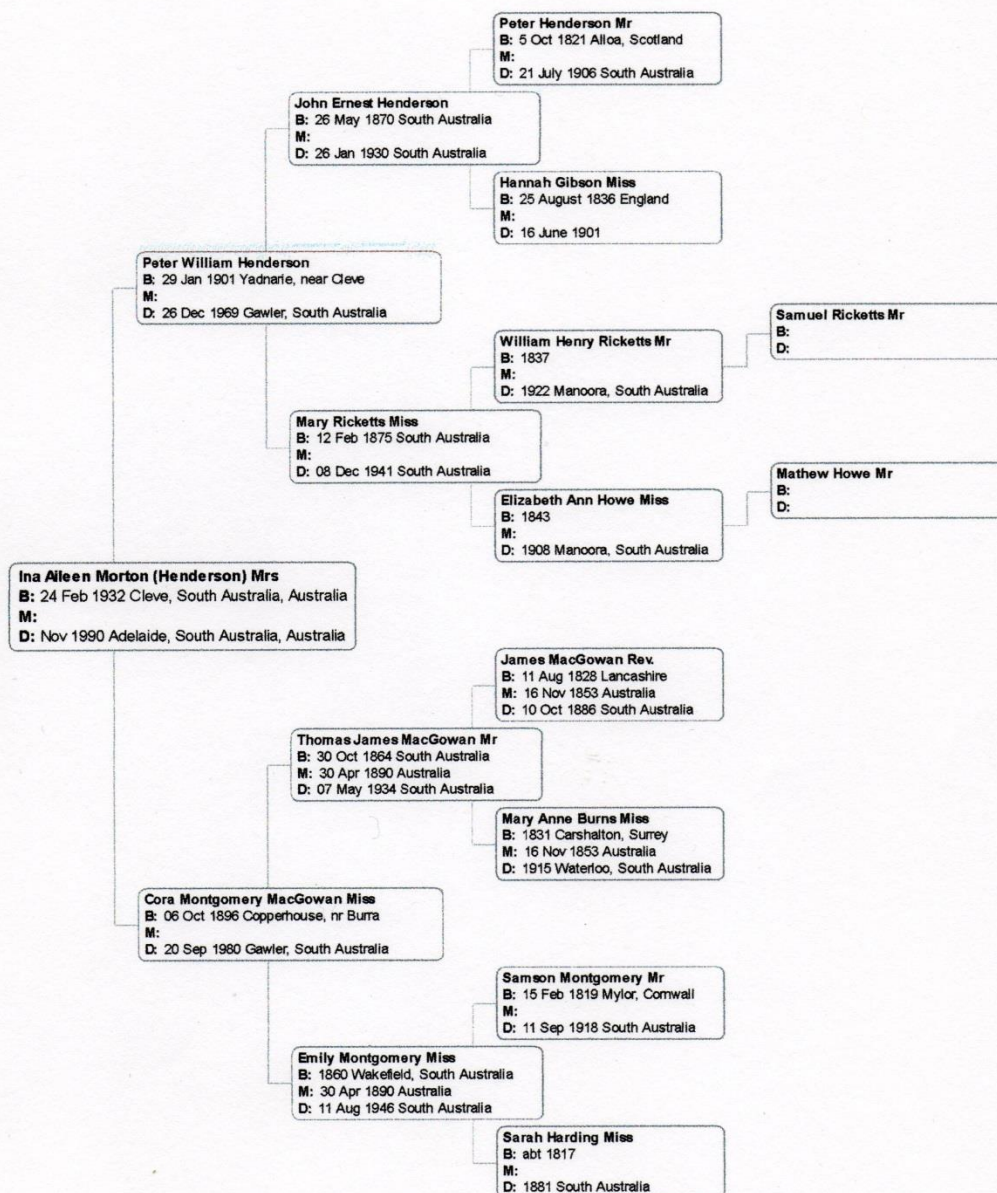
Source:
Laurie
McArthur



Woolshed

Homestead





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Acknowledgements

I wish to dedicate this book to my late parents, Colin and Ina French. Mum began the journey in 1953, by going to Pernatty to be governess to young Graham French, and married the older Colin in 1957. I also wish to dedicate the book to two Kokatha Elders, Rita Joslyn and her late sister, Cissy Sultan. With their help I gained more information about the group that passed through Pernatty and South Gap Stations.

The photos of deceased persons in this book are not intended to give any offence to the living.

I wish to thank Laurie McArthur for the abundance of photos he has taken of and around Pernatty. To Bob Greenfield of South Gap for the loan of that station's diaries. To Bob Greenfield (deceased) of Queensland and Jim Greenfield for their information.

To Dr Ellen Hall for her support, input, and patience for putting up with the difficulties I went through writing it.

Chapter One

In the Beginning

In May 2010 Pernatty Station was sold to the Greenfield family of Billa Kallina Station. This ended the ownership the French family had with this property, beginning with Walter David and Agnes French, when they took over the property in 1927, and finishing with their great-grandson Leslie. This will be not only a story of Pernatty and pastoralists, but also a story of the people, men, women and children, who depended upon them, as well as the people who had been there before, the Kokatha Aboriginal People, and of the land itself, a vast arid land, susceptible to drought, and floods when rains came. It also shows the difficulties of sustainability in marginal land, such as the area where Pernatty is situated.

The outback of South Australia occupies nearly 83 per cent of the state yet has only 1 per cent of the population. It lies within the latitudes 26 degrees S and 32 degrees S and longitudes 129 degrees E and 141 degrees E. The area mass is 295,000 square miles or 764,848 square kilometres. Rainfall is sparse yielding 10 inches (400 mm) per annum in a good year with drought a constant threat. The South Australian outback is the driest part in the driest state in Australia. The landscape varies from gibber plains (flat stones that soak up the heat in summer causing temperatures of over 50 degrees C), to red sand hills, as well as the characteristic 'tent-hill' formations, particularly the Andamooka Ranges, all of which are present on Pernatty. Clay pans, low granite outcrops and rock-holes also dominate the landscape. Native vegetation consists of eucalyptus trees along river courses, along with native pine, mulga, salt and blue-bush, and spinifex. Within this area of the outback lies the North-West of South Australia and the salt-encrusted Lake Torrens. 'Lake Torrens is a 5700 square kilometre

endorheic saline rift lake in South Australia. It forms part of the same rift valley that includes Spencer Gulf to the south and is approximately 240 kms long'.¹ It is also Australia's second largest lake after Lake Eyre and has filled only twice since the arrival of the British.

Wool and livestock produced in the pastoral region of the North-West of South Australia and west of Lake Torrens, after mining, had kept the state economy buoyant in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Roads were non-existent and tracks were made by the mail coaches, bullock, horse and camel teams. Port Augusta, surveyed in 1854, was important to the North-West of the state. It was built in response to the transport needs of the pastoralists to ship wool and livestock to Adelaide. In 1854, while the survey of Port Augusta was being undertaken, the first shipment of wool, twenty-five bales, was sent to Port Adelaide after being rowed out to a waiting ship. In 1860, 10,000 bales of wool had been shipped from Port Augusta, while in 1893, a massive 43,000 bales of wool were shipped as direct cargo to England. Copper ore mined in Blinman also boosted Port Augusta's significance when smelters were built in 1863. By 1882, the population of Port Augusta was 1,000, while the population of the state was 279,865. In due course, Port Augusta became the centre for banking and business for pastoral properties and mining companies, and the hub for the transcontinental railways.

Several well-known explorers were active in early South Australia, Benjamin Herschel Babbage, John McDouall Stuart and George Woodroffe Goyder to name a few. In May 1857, Goyder, the Assistant Surveyor-General in South Australia explored the country east of Lake Torrens in the North Flinders Ranges, and found flowing water and luxurious grasses. This led Goyder to report that the area was as good as the fields in Belgium, and pastoralists leased runs

¹ 'Lake Torrens', internet source:
www.australiannationalparks.com/southaustralia/laketorrens

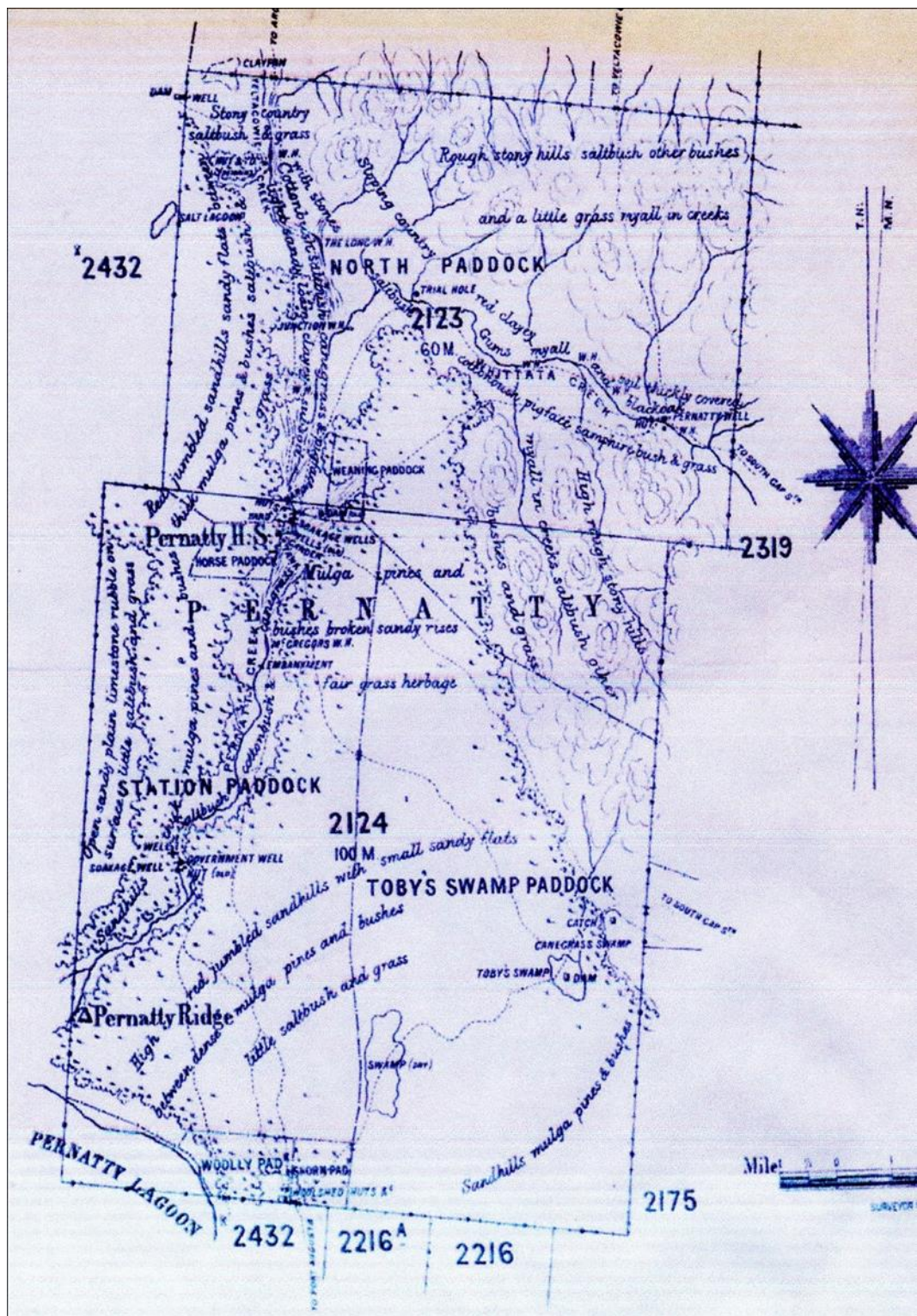
on the basis of this. In 1858, an Act was passed in the South Australian Parliament which set an 'assessment on stock so that the rental due from any leasehold was increased *pro rata* with the number of stock carried.' In 1861, provision was made for the classification of pastoral leaseholds in relation to the numbers of stock they could carry. This classification was carried out by Goyder, who inspected the runs in what proved to be an unusually good season. However, in 1865, there was a severe drought and within a year, 235,000 to 270,000 sheep perished. Goyder was sent back north to re-classify the runs and delineate between agriculturally productive and marginal land unfit for agriculture. This became known as Goyder's Line, where the land above the line was marginal and below productive (Pernatty is well above Goyder's Line). Babbage was the explorer who found the body of William Coulthard, who died of thirst on Pernatty in 1858 aged 36 years, and whose grave is still there. Coulthard had been the surveyor of the township of Nuriootpa. John McDouall Stuart also explored in the area around Pernatty and Laurie McArthur, wilderness photographer, followed Stuart's journey through Pernatty. The photos he took of the area can be found on the internet at www.southimage.net/wilderness-travel/ .

From the time the first pastoral leases were granted in the North-West in 1857 many leases grew into large family-owned pastoral properties. Those properties which were not viable owing to drought, or had owners, who were unwilling to continue with the leases, were bought by hardier pioneers. Two of these were the Greenfield brothers, William Henry (1856-1922) and George Hutchison (1857-1926). According to information from the South Gap letters and diaries gleaned by Bob Greenfield, who was born on Purple Downs Station, William was overseer of South Gap station from 1881 for John R Phillips of Kanyaka. Due to the drought Phillips abandoned South Gap in 1895 wherein William, with his brother George, began at the station in their own right for £500,

along with the Tower Hill and Sandy Point Paddocks which included the Beda Arm of Lake Torrens. The South Gap diaries begin from 1896. South Gap and Pernatty Stations became separate entities in September 1927 when William Henry Greenfield's estate was finalized, after the death of George in 1926.

This story concentrates, for the most part, on Pernatty Station, but includes information concerning South Gap Station, and deals primarily with Agnes French *nee* Greenfield, Walter David French, and Pernatty Station from 1927 onwards focusing on the station and of the community who resided on the property from the time of the separation from South Gap (1927). Most of the information included in this story comes from the Pernatty diaries. Prior to 1927, Pernatty was leased in 1868 by James Bowman on behalf of H. J. Richman. It was 200 square miles in size with the Pernatty Creek running through it and in 1871, was the first in the area to be stocked with sheep from Richman's Carriwillia Station. Two huts were built at Pernatty Waterhole. Due to a drought in the southern part of the state in 1874, a large flock of sheep was agisted for W. F. Woolridge (place unknown), while a James Moorhouse brought 2,000 sheep from Melrose for the same purpose. The shepherd was J. M. Litchfield. Eventually, W. F. McArthur became manager of the run, and he had the property fenced. He also lived there. This area is now known as Old Pernatty.

When Richman's lease ran out the Pastoral Board added the Willow paddock onto the run and offered the Pernatty lease for sale. In 1888, William Coombe of Partacoona (also spelt as Partacuna) Station (which is on the Quorn to Hawker road and still a going concern) bought it. In 1896 William Coombe with three men, a wagon, and 3,000 sheep went through South Gap along the main stock route to Pernatty. The Partacoona men became unpopular with the Greenfields as in 1898, due to their style of droving and using South Gap waters through the dry years. Coombe sold the Pernatty lease to William Henry



Map of original Pernatty Stn. Now known as Old Pernatty

Source: A J Greenfield

Greenfield of South Gap Station in 1906, and it stayed in William Greenfield's hands until 1927 when Walter and Agnes French took it over. The size of Pernatty Station is now 2284 square kilometres (850 square miles) due to Walter and Agnes buying the southern part of Yeltacowie Station in 1936, and Mount Gunson Station in 1938. The size of a property was important with regard to the number of sheep or cattle that could be pastured to create a sufficient income. Previously, in 1932, Walter and Agnes bought Glen Verne and Corraberra Stations, 12 miles (19 kms) from Port Augusta putting their eldest son Laurie, in charge. In 1948, they bought Mundallio Station, which was situated just out of Stirling North on the Quorn road. Their youngest son Jack went to live there. South Gap Station, 1,502 square kilometres (580 square miles), was originally bought by two Clare men in 1872, who did not improve or build on the lease. Eventually, they sold the lease to Grant, Thorold and Butler, who put William Greenfield in as manager. Under his management, improvements were made to the property with the digging of several good wells and buildings. Grant, Thorold and Butler did not continue with the lease when it expired as the low price of wool, drought and dingoes made the station unprofitable for them.

William and his brother George went into partnership and bought the South Gap lease in 1885, the partnership held the lease until 1906 when the brothers had a falling out and the partnership was dissolved on 31st May, with William and George then looking after their individual properties. William had South Gap Station where he and his family lived, Parakylia, Roxby Downs and in 1906, Pernatty Stations. George and his family lived at Purple Downs Station, and had Billa Kallina, Andamooka and Bosworth Stations. William died in 1922, and his estate was put into trust until the death of George in 1926, when the beneficiaries could take charge of their properties. This was when Walter and Agnes French became owners of Pernatty Station.

Walter came from a farming background. His grandparents, Isaac and Elizabeth French, had come from the rural village of Uley in Gloucestershire, on the ship *Lady Emma*, to South Australia in 1837. Uley village had been the home of the French family since a Thomas French had bought lands for £29.16s.0d in 1609. He was considered to be a wealthy yeoman. The woollen industry in Gloucestershire had been the best in England up until 1750 when it was surpassed by Yorkshire. In Uley there had been numerous cloth-mills making the finest cloth which, along with the rest of the west of England, mostly traded with Russia. Around 1810, Yorkshire began to make cloth quicker and cheaper, also using coal for their machinery, rather than the water-driven ones that were used in Gloucestershire. Competition was fierce between the two counties, and for the people of Uley, wages got lower and lower and the mills closed.² This change caused rural people hardship with little or no employment causing a workhouse to be built in Uley in 1830³, and farms were bought by others to extend small holdings. The many French families, among others, in the area decided they would emigrate to Canada, USA and Australia to take advantage of the new lands. Isaac's obituary was in the *Advertiser* in 1896 and contains further information.

On Monday, December 30, the very day on which the foundation of the Province was being celebrated at Glenelg, a pioneer of settlement died at Kensington in the person of Mr. Isaac French. With his wife he left Uley, Gloucestershire, in July, 1837, and, voyaging in the ship *Lady Emma* he arrived in Holdfast Bay on December 6 of the same year. A relative gives these particulars of Mr. French's colonial career: His first camp was in a tent on the banks of the Torrens, where the Torrens Lake now is. Thence he went to live on the Fourth Creek, and started farming and carting timber. Mr. French put the first crop in here the same year that Governor Hindmarsh left the colony. He paid £1 per bushel for the seed

² Baker, M. Lloyd, *The Story of Uley*. Pp. 36-38.

³ *Ibid.* p.39.

wheat, but did not reap any crop, as he only had a brush fence around it, and the South Australian Company's cattle broke down the fence and destroyed it all. Mr. French's house and its contents were burnt, and twice his crop was destroyed by bush fires. Mr. French claimed to be the first man to make a plough and chaffcutter in the colony. From Fourth Creek he went to Sheoak Log, and took up one of the first six sections that were surveyed there, and started farming. He emigrated to the Victorian diggings in 1852, going up the Murray with two teams of bullocks, taking flour, cheese, and bacon. He had a very rough trip in a very wet winter and the Murray was very high. The party had to make a road part of the way, and it took them three months to get to the diggings. Mr. French did not do any digging but sold the stores he took over and then went to Melbourne to buy more. He purchased gold with the money and returned to Adelaide in 1853 by way of the Coorong and, through the desert. He and his party met a band of bushrangers, but they were not interfered with. Mr. French returned to Sheoak Log and began farming on a larger scale. When he and his wife arrived in the colony they had three children – two daughters and one son – and three were born in the colony, two sons and a one daughter. They retired from farming about 15 years ago, and four years ago went to live at Kensington. Here Mrs. French died last October at the age of 93, her husband having reached his 95th year at the time of his decease. The sons are Mr. David French, of Eudunda, Messrs. Henry and John French [Walter's father], of Willochra; and the daughters Mrs. E. Probyn and Mrs. C. C. Ford, Kensington; and Mrs. Lamb, California. There are 37 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

The Advertiser, Tuesday 28 January 1896, page 3.

In 1886 John and his wife Susan moved to the town of Willochra, (established 1856) which was on the Quorn to Hawker road, from Arden Vale where they had lived since 1876, to farm wheat on a section of 630 acres. Willochra was a town that suffered from either floods due to its proximity to the

Willochra Creek, which became a raging torrent after heavy rains, or droughts. For a number of years wheat was grown in abundance but by the 1920s, drought was a constant partner and the people of Willochra began to drift towards Quorn or other districts. By the 1960s the town was deserted and all there is to show of it is a marker by the Quorn-Hawker road, and stone rubble of some of the buildings. Walter was born in 1876, the fifth of ten children. When he was fifteen, he went to work for William Coombe, owner of Partacoona Station near Willochra. Walter was the stockman chosen to look after the stock on the Pernatty block. A letter from WD French dated June 1959 recollected that in 1896, there were 28,500 sheep on Pernatty. In 1897 after a severe drought, only 703 sheep remained alive out of over 24,000.⁴ In 2008, the average number of sheep pastured on Pernatty was between 4,000 and 8,000 depending on the amount of feed available.

Originally, William and George's father, William Greenfield, sailed from Dover in 1848, and made his way to South Australia where he gained employment as a stockman and shepherd at Kanyaka Station, now in ruins and situated between Quorn and Hawker, in the Northern Flinders Ranges, and was managed by Hugh Proby. He married Letitia Redpath in 1854 and William was born in 1855 and George in 1857. William senior died in 1872 and the then manager of Kanyaka, John Phillips, trained the two boys in the skills needed for life on a pastoral station. Eventually, John Phillips and William Greenfield took up the lease for the South Gap run in 1878 for the firm of Grant, Thorold and Butler.⁵ William married Jessie Winton in 1883 and Agnes was born 1884, the first of ten children. She grew up on South Gap Station helping to look after her younger siblings and learning the skills of looking after the homestead, nursing sick workers and helping with the outside chores when needed. She met Walter

⁴ Letter from WD French to Professor Coombe, University of Southampton, June, 1959.

⁵ A J Greenfield, *Two Good Men: The Greenfield Brothers – Northern Pioneers of South Australia 1856-1926* (Mount Gambier, 2003), pp1-3.

French when he went through the station with the stock from, and to, Partacoona Station. They married at Willochra in 1903, and had six children, William John Lawrence (Laurie) born 1904, Evelyn Agnes (Sis) born 1908, Walter Edmund Stanley (Walty) born 1909, William Royal (Bill) born 1911, Thomas Victor (Tom) born 1913, and John Denton (Jack) born 1915. William Greenfield had noticed in 1904 that Pernatty was now in bad condition and was put on sale by William Coumbe then. By then Agnes is pregnant, so one of the buildings at South gap was done out enabling Walter and Agnes to live at one end, with George and his family at the other. William bought the Pernatty lease in 1906. Walter French had been working at South Gap since his marriage in 1903, and William obviously liked his abilities and made him overseer of South Gap Station, instead of his son, George. Walter attended a livestock sale at Wilmington, purchasing sheep and cattle on behalf of his boss in 1906. Walter takes more responsibility with the running of South Gap in 1907, as William had a long illness and was laid up. Walter gives the men the orders of the day, and supervises in the running of the station. He also goes up north, either assisting with the droving of stock or mustering on, to and from, Andamooka Station, Chances Swamp (Roxby Downs), and Purple downs Station. Also in 1907, William brings Pernatty into working order by having the well cleaned out at 37' 6" deep, with a 31foot wooden shaft put in to give it better water capacity. As the homestead, fences, gates and yards were in poor condition, the men took stone from a quarry that had been dug in the 1870s, and built the Overseer's house. I am not sure if this is at Old Pernatty or Pernatty Well however, whichever one it is Walter and Agnes took charge of it on 14th December 1907, going back to South Gap for Christmas dinner.

In 1927 when Walter, Agnes and family moved to the new homestead at Acacia Creek, Pernatty Station, thirteen of South Gap's staff went with them. They were Mr. & Mrs. G Munro (bookkeeper), Mrs. Hunter (cook), L Kent, Jas Hill, Mr.

& Mrs. E (Ted) Goodwin and daughter Mary, Otto Jaunecke, Mr. & Mrs. Henry Oliver Riggs and family, E Hodges, brothers H and W Domyer (dam sinkers), F Cox, A Browing, and C Ketteringham, leaving twelve staff for South Gap Station. Mr. & Mrs. Munro lived on the station for another two years when Mr. Munro applied for the old-age pension. He was 70 years old. They moved to Port Augusta to live. Mr & Mrs Goodwin, with daughter Mary, were situated at the Woodforde to look after the sheep and ensure the vermin fence was in good order. They came to the homestead with horse and buggy to collect the mail and goods. Sometimes Mary would ride in on her horse to see Agnes and pick up anything needed. Mr. & Mrs. Riggs were situated at Pernatty Well, attending to the sheep, checking the waters and trapping vermin. However, after two weeks they left with their two children for another employment. Mrs. Riggs married Laurie French in later years. Otto Jaunecke was situated at North Eliza while Jas Hill looked after the South Eliza area. The other workers were situated at the homestead area or at South Gap Station. The women did not move from South Gap Station until the 9th of December 1927, when the homestead was completed, while some of the station hands slept in tents at Pernatty until the men's hut was built. The buildings were all finished by the first quarter of 1928. It would be 1935 before the shearing shed at Gum Creek, which used the timber from Port Augusta's flour mill that had been pulled down, was built to allow the Pernatty brand to be fully self-sufficient, instead of using South Gap's shearing shed.

Pastoral properties vary in size. Those close to Pernatty and South Gap Stations are Oakden Hills Station, which is 2,202 square kilometres (850 square miles), Roxby Downs Station, 2,331 square kilometres (900 square miles) currently destocked for mining, and Billa Kallina Station 2,590 square kilometres (1,000 square miles). A letter from WD French dated June 1959 recollected that in 1896, there were 28,500 sheep on Pernatty. In 1897 after a severe drought, only

703 sheep remained alive out of over 24,000. In 2008, the average number of sheep pastured on Pernatty is between 4,000 and 8,000 depending on the amount of feed available.

The consequences of drought to the land, including the loss of stock and the damage to the land by dust storms, or by flooding rains, ruining fences and buildings and any other infrastructure, and destroying stock, is described by Walter. Because of the importance and topicality of drought, one of the chapters is devoted to drought, showing the effects on Australia and on South Australia, and South Australia's vulnerability to drought, and the emotional and economic cost of drought on Pernatty. Australia is a large continental land mass with weather systems varying from tropical, to sub-tropical, to Mediterranean, to temperate. The Continent sits astride latitudes, which ensure that, for the most part, the far North and South have reasonably regular rainfall. However, over the middle of the Continent, where much of the Northern pastoral area is, rainfall is low and highly erratic.

Pernatty, most years, has been perched on the brink of disaster. A year of plentiful rain, which in itself can cause an enormous amount of damage, has been invariably followed by poor, dry conditions. Stock losses, particularly sheep, were in earlier years massive and the owners of Pernatty spent an inordinate amount of time, money and labour of attempting to waterproof the station. One of the chapters is all about drought on Pernatty and is almost completely reliant on the Station Diaries of Pernatty. These diaries were written daily and detail the work and time spent digging wells and dams, repairing machinery, carrying feed to stock, herding sheep to other areas where there was water. They also detail the sorrow at stock losses, not just for the economic loss. Walter French wrote in 1928 'The sheep give us a living, and it is up to us to ensure their well-being is of the utmost importance.' He also said, after seeing a demonstration of mulesing

(removing skin from around the tail of sheep to prevent fly strike) that it would not happen on Pernatty because it was too cruel. Instead, the sheep were shorn mid-season around the tail, (crutching).

The importance of sheep and wool production to Australia and South Australia cannot be understated as, for example, in 1860, Australia had 20,135,286 sheep, 2,824,811 of which were in South Australia. By 1954, there were 130,848,874 sheep nationally, 12,817,135 of which were in South Australia. In 1860, Australia's wool production was 54,453,000 pounds, which included 11,737,000 pounds from South Australia. By 1954, Australia's wool production was 1,245,462,000 pounds valued at £409,768,000, which included 155,761,000 pounds of wool worth £48,579,000 from South Australia. In 1927-28, Australia's total wool and sheepskin exports was £63,493,419, which was 49.3% of Australia's total exports, while in 1954-55, it was 49.2% of Australia's total trade Australia until relatively recently.

The wool clip had been Pernatty's and most other stations main source of income, which sustained the family and the workers throughout the year. Hence, shearing was an important time of the year as was the well-being of the sheep. There were other sources of income, derived throughout the year, which included the sale of cattle and skins. The Depression years and World War Two brought gradual changes within the pastoral industry in general and to Pernatty, in particular, which transformed pastoralism from a labour-intensive industry to a more mechanically assisted enterprise. Sheep can graze on most vegetation but must have water or moisture from grass. The rams on Pernatty were bought from Collinsville Sheep Stud, Mount Bryan situated near Burra in South Australia, which was one of the best in South Australia, if not Australia, and Pernatty's wool is classed as 'fine to medium quality', with each sheep producing four to five kilograms of wool. In a telephone conversation with Colin French, then owner of

Pernatty, he advised that in a drought, there is less grease (lanolin) in the wool and therefore weighs less.

In the early years, the people on the stations had to make their own entertainment including tennis and cricket matches between stations, or going to the races. Pernatty had film nights, and there were large turnouts at Christmas and Easter. There were visits by many, including from the Mines and Lands Department or the University of Adelaide, and every visit meant a degree of entertainment or a change from the norm. Birthday parties were also a good reason to get together, even a visit by the Bishop of Willochra meant a meeting between friends. Sundays, unless the stockhands were mustering sheep, was a day off. Many stockhands negotiated with Walter to have several days off for a special occasion. Meeting the 'tea and sugar' train, which, besides being the mail train was a vitally important link between people on properties and the wider community. It was the source of food and mail, with nursing and medicines available at clinics held on the train. It was also a chance to meet neighbours and to socialise weekly. Pernatty had the 'mail run' to Bookaloo, which meant that they picked up the mail, freight and passengers from the railway siding at Bookaloo, 56 kms from Pernatty. They delivered to Mount Gunson, Yeltacowie and South Gap stations and collected a small fee.

Although the Kokatha Aboriginal people had been granted absolute access to and through the original South Gap station, with work and rations added, this goodwill eventually declined, particularly on Pernatty. Until 1900, Aboriginal visits to the South Gap homestead had been occasional, but with permanent water made available at the Gypsum Bore, a group of Aboriginal people camped in the nearby sand hills.

There was a need for the provision of education for children living on isolated properties. In the middle of the 1920s, South Gap Station had a state

school which had approximately eighty pupils, but as soon as the properties were separated when William Henry Greenfield's will was finalized, both properties had again to employ governesses. The Correspondence School in Adelaide arose with a request to the Government from a number of outback families in 1917, who wanted their children to receive some sort of education. They were too far away from any available school for daily lessons while the alternative was to send their children to boarding schools in Quorn, Port Augusta or Adelaide, or to board them with relatives in various towns. In the Report of the Minister of Education, 1919, the Superintendant of Primary Education wrote, 'There are scores of children living on the frontiers of settlement whose homes are so remote from any school that they have no chance whatever of receiving education in the usual way.' Inspector Longmore, mentioned two families, 400 miles (640 kilometres) and 320 miles (512 kilometres) respectively from the nearest school. One family lived near the Western Australian border, while many children lived along the camel tracks in the far north and along the East-West railway. In 1918, a system of teaching by correspondence was started in a very small way with volunteer teachers. A large number of applicants and greater demands on the time of the volunteers led the government to establish the Correspondence School in 1920. There were 240 children and five teachers plus a head teacher, Miss S Twiss in the first year. Governesses on stations taught children using materials from the Correspondence School, and children and parents or governesses occasionally went to Adelaide to meet the teachers.

The distances some properties were from towns were immense and created difficulties when there were health problems before the advent of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). Most property histories tell stories of the difficulties of obtaining medical attention, the injuries suffered, the time it took women to get to the closest town for help with complications in their pregnancies.

Pernatty was 90 miles (144 kms) from Port Augusta on a dirt road. Even today, the 56 kilometres from the homestead to the main highway is on a dirt road. The early twentieth century was a time when people had either to help themselves or rely on nearest neighbours, usually many kilometres away. Agnes French, reminiscing in *The Country Women's Association Newsletter* in 1956, re-published in 1962, wrote, 'In cases of emergency, people just had to help each other - my Mother rode 40 miles on horseback with her 18 month old baby and a parcel of clothes strapped at the back of the saddle to help a woman taken suddenly ill...and looked after her for ten days.' This would have been at the turn of the century. In 1972, Doctor Charles Duguid wrote 'Doctor and the Aborigines'. Duguid was born in Scotland and immigrated to Australia in 1912. He was a country doctor then developed an interest in Aboriginal people and their treatment in the early 1930s. Jeanette Dunn, in 1991 wrote the story of her journey to Oodnadatta and Andamooka hospitals in the 1940s and the difficulties in caring for the sick so far from the city. She wrote of traveling long distances to get to properties to help sick or injured workers or pregnant women. In 2001, the Australian Bureau of Statistics published 'Child Health since Federation'. This publication details the health of children in the one hundred years since Federation and the improvement shown. It shows the fall in infant mortality, the fall in deaths from infectious diseases, the rise in male suicide rates, the falls in infections like poliomyelitis and the rise in respiratory diseases such as asthma. However, this study does not differentiate between rural or urban children

Chapter Two

Life on Pernatty

Walter began to plant gum and pepper corn trees around the buildings and house dam for shade and comfort in 1927. He had imposed a 'No Drinking' policy for the Pernatty area. This was brought about by the death of his father John in 1913, who having consumed half a bottle of whisky, went riding on his horse around the farm at Willochra. John had no control of the horse when it became spooked and consequently, fell to his death. Anyone found drinking, whether stationhand or shearer, was dismissed. This gave Agnes a problem as she always put brandy in the Christmas cake, so one bottle of brandy was bought for 'medicinal' purposes. It would be replenished when empty after a number of years. Their son, Walty, had the same rule when he became the owner of Pernatty.

In the meantime, Agnes got the homestead in order with the help of her daughter Evelyn (called Sis by her brothers, and Aunt Sis later in life). Mrs. Dinah Barber and daughter Mary also lent a hand, along with longtime maid Bessie Candy. From early January 1928 Mildred Robins came out to work at the homestead, and eventually married Walty. Agnes had worked around her parent's property, South Gap Station, since she was capable of doing so, but officially since she was 12 years of age. In 1897, Agnes helped her Uncle George to rope and hold down a bull while he castrated and branded it, going onto her kitchen duties afterwards. She would, along with a couple of her sister, ride out to deliver and/or collect the mail from the South Gap woolshed, or bring in daily the cows and horses. Often, she was left in charge of South Gap homestead, looking after her siblings and housemaids while her mother Jessie, went out to other areas to

help women in childbirth or sickness. She was dependable and fair-minded but if anyone was dishonest or lazy she would have nothing to do with them. Although most of the information within this book comes from the Pernatty diaries, I will, for the moment, touch more on Agnes, via a letter from Mary Barber, who wrote in 2006,

‘My dad and mum (Bert & Edith), along with us six children, shifted from Iron Knob to a place on Pernatty and lived in tents. Dad and his brother began dam sinking with the horse and scoop. At the age of 13 ... I left the family and shifted to the home of Walter and Agnes, to work as a housemaid, long hours, and plenty of work confronted me for the next four years. There were the flies, a mouse plague and dust storms to name a few, of the less pleasant things. I remember checking on Agnes sleeping on the sofa, and thought she would suffocate, and my footprints were clearly visible in the dust on the lino.’

Mary remembers Agnes making up large winter nighties, and knitting as well, and often the Barber family would walk two miles to the homestead on a Saturday night to listen to the cowboys on Walter & Agnes’ radio. After having a supper of a drink and a biscuit the family would walk back to their camp after the entertainment. Agnes had a set of ‘Mrs. Potts’ irons which Mary used to do the ironing. These were heated on top of the wood stove. A detachable handle was used to grip them, and when the iron cooled while ironing, it was put back on the stove, and another iron was used. They were not light for I, (the author), had one drop on my big toe when I was a child, causing the nail to come adrift. It was very painful.

In 1926, Agnes joined the South Australian branch of the Country Women’s Association, contributed to the newsletters and enjoyed the many trips that the Association offered to its members. Throughout the diaries Walter always

mentions when Agnes goes, what towns she will be going through, and when she would be back. Neither of them liked to be away from the other for a long period of time. In fact, the regard they had for each other endured until their deaths. Certainly, in the letters they wrote to each other, the warmth and love could be felt, even in the later years, when ill-health overtook them. Many times Agnes went to Port Augusta for medical treatment & supervision, staying with either Laurie or Jack, or the Great Western Hotel, before the house at 67 Hospital Road, was bought. During the years at Pernatty, Agnes would help look after relatives, or station people, when they were ill. One person who was looked after by Agnes, as well as other members of her family, was Mrs. Susan French, Walter's mother. Her obituary appeared in 'The Advertiser', on the 23rd July 1929 saying,

Susan French, who died on July 2 at the residence of her daughter, Mrs.W. Hooper, Lane-street, North Richmond, was to her 85th year. She was born in Bristol, and arrived in Adelaide in 1863 by the Northumberland. On November 1, 1866, she married Mr. John French, youngest son of Mr. Isaac French, of Sheaoak Log, where they lived for several years, afterwards going to Crystal Brook. When the northern districts were opened, Mr. and Mrs. French went to Arden Vale, where they farmed until 1886, removing shortly afterwards to Willochra Plains. Mr. French met his death in 1913 as the result of an accident. Mrs. French then went to Quorn and opened a nursing home, which she conducted for a number of years. Recently Mrs. French had resided with her sons and daughters. She was buried at Quorn.

The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA: 1889-1931), Tuesday 23 July 1929, p.15.

So what do the diaries say? I am beginning with 1928 and finishing in 1961, with just a snapshot of months of years due to the amount of information in them because Walter was a prolific writer.

1928

January – Walter gave instructions to his men as he did every morning while he lived on Pernatty, wrote up the mail and took it to South Gap and gave it to George. Later he took the mail passengers to Bookaloo Railway Siding. Walter J. Greenfield passed through enroute to Roxby Downs but came back owing to getting stuck in the sand.

February – Laurie started for Wilmington taking Agnes, Tom and Jack down to school. Messrs Stoker, Vausen and Furrier came along with a WilleysKnight car. Agnes, Mrs Bainbridge and Bessy Candy came on the mail. Bainbridge and Candy to work at Pernatty homestead (the House).

March – Mrs Welk, two children and Mildred Robins went to Port Augusta to stay. Misses Walsh and Batty, and Mrs Greenfield came out from South Gap in Miss Walsh's car. J Clarke, a hawker, stayed a couple of days.

April – Thomas Victor French and family came to the station on their way to Quorn. Laurie left the station to go to Port Augusta to be married. Walter, Agnes, Walty, Bill, E Bainbridge, and Miss Candy went from the station to see Laurie marry Mary Sanderson. Everything went well and the above returned to the station at night while Laurie and Mary started for Adelaide in their car.

May – Octavius and Edmund French came at night to the station and, with Walter, went to Purple Downs to pick up Thomas (these three men are Walter's brothers), went back to Pernatty to pick up Agnes then onto Quorn. Their mother was very ill.

June - Mesdames Carmen Greenfield and Glover, Mr and Mrs Welk and family, as well as other people from South Gap Station, came to Pernatty for Evelyn

French's 21st birthday Party. Agnes came back from Quorn with the Welks. Pernatty played South Gap in a cricket match, the first of many friendly games. The score was Pernatty 63, South Gap 38. The Surveyor-General, Mr T. E. Day, and his son-in-law Mr Cook, came to the station and stayed the night, leaving the next day to visit the stations of the north-west.

July – Norman Greenfield and his mother, Mrs George Greenfield, passed on their way to Port Augusta from Purple Downs, and stayed for dinner. They stayed at Pernatty, when they came back a couple of days later, for the night.

September – Walter took delivery of a new Buick Tourer car on behalf of the station and signed all the papers. Mr G. Parr took the Hup car in on the new Buick and took it away to Port Augusta. The Tourer cost £398. Reverend and Mrs Murchison came to the station, going onto South Gap Station the next day. Edmund French, his wife and daughter Susie, came from Purple Downs in their car, on the way to Willochra, and stayed for two days. George, Mrs Greenfield, J. Hall, Miss Batty, Mr Miller (teacher) and Mr Ross from Horwood Bagshaw, came from South Gap on a visit for the afternoon. Walter, Agnes, Bill and Mary went to Port Augusta for a week.

1st October 1928 – Pernatty's first birthday under Walter and Agnes French.

October – Engell, a hawker, came to the station in the morning, leaving after dinner enroute to Yeltacowie. Another hawker, F. Eagle, came a week later to the station then went to the Woodforde where the Goodwins were, onto Tadpole, then to Yeltacowie. G.Heading and sister came with a Mr Walkley, leaving for Adelaide the next day taking Evelyn French with them. Mr Stirling of the Vacuum Oil Company came with a friend for business.

December – Parliamentary Party visited Pernatty consisting of Messrs R D, McEwin, Thompson, Anthony, and McCullum doing a tour of inspection on

account of the Pastoral Bill before the South Australian Parliament. Otto Jaenecke died in Port Augusta Hospital, being away from Pernatty for awhile. There were 22 people at Pernatty for Christmas day – Walter, Agnes, Laurie and Mary, Evelyn, Walty, Bill, Tom, Jack and Susie French, Bessie Candy, F. Cox, W. Ash, Mr Munro, Mr and Mrs Goodwin and daughter Mary, Jas Finn, Jas Hill and Sandy Rowe.

1930

January – Syd Welk came to the station with Laurie for a holiday. Garnie Heading and his mother came to Pernatty from Adelaide for the night. Took Evelyn to Port Augusta next day and returned back to the station. Reverend Messrs Barnes and Huchison came along to the station to give a lantern lecture on Papua, leaving the next day to go to South Gap Station.

February – Evelyn left Pernatty to go to Port Augusta to get married on the 22nd, to Garnett Heading, at the Methodist Church by Rev. Huchison. They then left for Adelaide.

1932

July – The members of the Pastoral Board came to inspect the Pernatty leases with a view of letting new leases. The members were Messrs Day, McGilp, McLachlan, and the driver Brooks. They then went onto South Gap after going all over Pernatty Station. Walty had gone into Port Augusta to collect Mrs W H Greenfield and Miss Mildred Robins to Pernatty. Mrs Greenfield then went onto Purple Downs and Roxby Downs Stations. On the 27th, Walter and Agnes heard that Mr Kidman had died suddenly at Oakden Hills Station.

October – Walter, along with Mr O J Young and Bill, had a look over a good part of Corraberra Station properly that is being offered for auction. The country is looking well.

November – Corraberra purchased by Dalgety and Company for W D & A French for £4,900, on the 15th. On the 18th Walter and Agnes got ready and went to Port Augusta in connection with the purchase of Corraberra. Called at Glen Verne and saw Bill. Went onto Quorn to see the Dalgety people then out to Edmund's place and stayed the night. Walter and Agnes took delivery of Corraberra Station on the 23rd, with Laurie to manage it. The 27th was the anniversary of William Henry Greenfield buying Pernatty Station from William Coumbe of Partacoona Station.

1933

January – Norman Greenfield and Tom French passed through on their way from Port Augusta to Purple Downs. Laurie packing up household goods to go to Corraberra to look after that end, and agreed to £156 per annum. Laurie, along with wife Mary, Don, bob and Jim, left Pernatty to live at Corraberra, 12 mile out from Port Augusta.

April 19th – Walter Edmund Stanley French (Walty) married Mildred Esther Robins at the Church of England church, Port Augusta at 4:10 pm, and started off for a trip in their car. Everyone attended the ceremony, with Walter and Agnes coming back to Pernatty that evening.

May – Walty to start at £2/2/- per week. He and Mildred returned to Pernatty on the 8th.

November – Messrs B T Young and Whitford of Elders came along and stayed the night at Pernatty, after having had a look around at the country, some they

hadn't seen before. Bessie Candy had her 21st birthday party with the attendance of 50 people.

December – There were 21 people at Pernatty homestead for Christmas dinner, including South Gap and Yeltacowie people. Walty and Mildred went to Port Augusta after morning tea, taking Joan Greenfield with them.

1934

January – White Frost freezer outfit fixed up in the house. The first ice made on Pernatty which should be a help during the hot months. Mrs H J Daw died at Port Augusta West. The Daw family had lived for many years at Whittata in the interest of South Gap.

March – Walty went to Port Augusta to bring his wife Mildred, and baby son Colin, home.

June – The young folks went to Yudnapinna Woolshed to a dance social. Messrs Mathieson and Anderson of Dalgety came along and stayed the evening, left next day for Purple Downs Station. Mildred's father Jack Robins, came to stay with her for a few days. D J Greenfield, Mrs Greenfield, and two children passed through the station, picking up Jack Robins, and continued to Roxby Downs Station. The South Gap women came out for dinner – Mrs G W Greenfield, Jean Greenfield, M McMaulty, and Mrs Isaacson and daughter.

December – Ethuey McCoy started work at 10/- per week as housemaid. Agnes, Minnie Hacket and E McCoy are at the House while the men are out checking the stock, water and fences. Thirty people are present for Christmas dinner. The young folk are playing tennis. Minnie Hacket received word that one of her brothers had died and was buried the previous Sunday. She left Pernatty for home for a few days.

1935

January – Agnes went to Corraberra taking Zetta and Eva Hall with her, coming back a week later with Walter, who needed to get the hood of the car fixed.

February – Three travellers came along in a motor buckboard looking for work, stayed the night and went onto Port Augusta the next day.

August – Minnie Hacket left the station with Bill, who returned the next day, bringing Florrie French to take Minnie's place, as well as Mesdames Robins and Welk, Ivy and Joy. Agnes, Mildred and Mrs Robins went to the Port taking Colin away ill. Walty drove them in.

1936

January 21st – 'King George V died this day approx. 10 am.'

February – Agnes and Florrie went to Corraberra and Port Augusta in the car with Walter, then onto the Quorn picnic. They came home several days later bringing Minnie Hacket with them.

March – Agnes, Mildred and Colin out in the car to the Willows and Toby swamp for the day. Bill started for Quorn taking Florrie and Minnie with him. Jack French and E McCoy went over to Monalena Station. Allen Robins came along with F Welk and stayed with his sister Mildred.

May – Teddy Parker passed through Pernatty carrying his swag. Tom and Jack passed through from Monalena Station enroute to Adelaide. Walter went to see the Goodwood Cup in Adelaide. He also saw Mr Dithy at Dalgety in reference to Yeltacowie, while down. Harold Kleeman, of Yeltacowie, married Bessie Candy in Adelaide, so Walter and Jack went to the wedding after going to Morphetville to see the running of the King's Cup race. Walter, Agnes, Tom, Jack, Evelyn and Ruth Heading, went out and saw the Onkaparinga Woollen Mills. Walter went to

Dalgety again in reference to Yeltacowie then went onto Port Augusta and out to Corraberra. Walty and family went to Monalena Station and brought Avis McCoy back to Pernatty.

May 24th – Laurie and family came along in the evening from Corraberra with a message re Yeltacowie, to meet at Pernatty awaiting the Purple Downs people. Two days later, Laurie started for Corraberra, got as far as Whittata and was recalled back to Pernatty as Norman Greenfield and Aunt Edie had arrived. Walter went into the matter of Yeltacowie with Norman and came to the arrangement to subdivide the station, Purple Downs to have the Bosworth end and Pernatty the south end. Working plant to be divided at price to inspect, £17,500, made up as the Purple £9,250 and Pernatty £8,250 respectively. Laurie returned to Corraberra and sent a message to Dalgety with details.

On the 30th May, Norman Greenfield and his mother came back to Pernatty to go out with Walter, Walty, and Mr Latimer (Dalgety) to view Yeltacowie. Onto North Bosworth, Sells Dam, Sherry Dam and back up to Old Yeltacowie. They found the top end looking fresh and well, but the south end was desolate due to bad management and droughty conditions. Mr Latimer went back to Adelaide while Norman and his mother stayed at Pernatty for the weekend. Papers were signed by Walter and Agnes for the transfer of the south end of Yeltacowie, while Norman signed for the north end. It was approved in July.

June – Avis McCoy started work at Walty's and Mildred's place at 10/- per week.

July 27th – Norman Greenfield went through the Bosworth. Walter and Agnes took over the southern end of Yeltacowie from Harold Kleeman, and helped divide the stores and part of the plant with Norman, but the engines in the shop, damsinking plant, the truck and the Buckboard were not divided. There was a dispute about

the shearing engine. Norman claimed that it should belong to Bosworth when it was fixed in the woolshed when it was inspected.

30th September – Bill married Minnie Hackett at the Church of England in Quorn at 7.30 in the evening.

20th November – Bill and Minnie went out to Yeltacowie to live. Agnes and Mary DeKane went out to help put the house in order and returned to Pernatty two days later.

1937

January – Mildred ill and was shifted over to Agnes' bedroom. Walty took Mildred to Port Augusta and Agnes went too, to make sure she would be alright. Walty and Agnes returned to Pernatty the next day bringing Bob and Don with them from Corraberra. Ken Glover started work, was 12 years old. Jack French, Avis McCoy and Mary DeKane went to Bookaloo for the dances.

March – Polling Day – Walter acting as Presiding Officer for the Pernatty Polling Booth, while Walty acted as Poll Clerk. George and Eric Greenfield, Bill McDowall, Mrs Grantham, Phil Young and Ruby came out from South gap to vote. Henry James and Octavius Taylor French came out from Quorn on a visit for the weekend, took the Ballot Box to the Postmaster at Port Augusta. Irwin Greenfield brought the Lister engine back from the Bosworth to Yeltacowie. Walter and Bill climbed to the top of Bottle hill. He writes that he 'has had an inclination to go to the top for many years'. Allan Robins started to work at Pernatty.

April – Bill came to Pernatty in the evening of the 1st to inform Walter and Agnes that his wife Minnie had a daughter Norma. He went to Quorn to bring home his wife and daughter on the 23rd.

June – Agnes went to Yeltacowie to see how Minnie was getting on. Staying to help with the work and nurse Minnie and the baby for a few days.

July – Walter and Agnes went to Port Augusta for five days to go to the horse races and dog trials, had teeth out then went back to Pernatty. Gordon Ash came along in a buckboard looking for work, stayed the night and began work next day.

November – Walty went to Purple Downs taking Mildred, Colin, Evelyn and Ruth Heading, while Agnes went with Messrs Klæbe and White. They all came back a couple of days later. Jack French went to Port Augusta for his holidays and to get his eyes tested. Took the Buick in to get rebored.

1938

January - Avis McCoy went to Port Augusta, coming back the next day with Joyce Glover. Heard by mail that George Greenfield had been 'had up' for driving his car under the Influence of Drink.

April – Walty, Mildred and Colin went on holidays, away for three weeks. Agnes had her birthday on the 29th.

October – Walter, Agnes, Walty, and Mildred went to Hard Struggle for a picnic, while Jack, R Creighton, R Hall, Allan Robins, Mrs Black and E Hall went to South Gap to play tennis.

1939

January – Agnes went to Port Augusta as she had not been feeling well since the heatwave, to see the doctor. Jack drove her in and came home the same evening, bringing Avis McCoy with him.

February – Walter went to Port Augusta, stayed at Corraberra for the night. He took Colin with him.

March – Agnes came home after being on the sick list. R Creighton (stationhand) went away on the mail. Not wanted back on Pernatty again at anytime.

May 27th – Walter, Agnes, Walty, Mildred and Colin, Bill and family went to the wedding of Jack French and Avis McCoy at the English Church in Port Augusta. Nice little turnout. Saw Jack and Avis off at the Railway Station. Messrs Hutchins and A McMullin came out from South Gap and stayed the night, doing a tour of the North-west. Went onto Yeltacowie the next day.

June – Walty, Mildred and Colin came back to Pernatty after their holiday, as did Bill, Minnie, Norma and Denton. Tom came in his car. Jack and Avis came back from their honeymoon.

August – Germany attacked Poland on the 1st. heard a report over the wireless that England and Germany were at war, also Australia. On the 5th, Walter and Agnes heard over the wireless that 'all woolgrowers had been advised to hold their wool back until further notice'. Jack, Avis, Colin, Geof, Iris Naulty and A Reilly went out to Pernatty Well and picked plenty of wild peaches (quondongs).

November – L Hacket and J Barber left for Port Augusta with Walter, as was Agnes going to Corraberra to keep house while Mary French went to the West Coast. Walter and Laurie went down the West Coast to Rudall, to H Chelman's place for a trip, to take Mary for a few weeks holiday, and stayed the night.

December – all employees, except H Barber and family, and Mr and Mrs Wilson, at the House for Christmas dinner with 33 people in all. A quiet, but very good, Christmas generally. Jack, Avis and Geof went to Monalena Station in the afternoon returning next day.

Exit 1939 – Last but not least, war raging over the biggest part of the world.



Agnes with Ruth & Glen Heading, Norma, Hurtle, Denton & Colin French (not necessarily in that order).

1940

January – Jack Barber started for South Gap with his plant. Came back to Pernatty to get petrol and went to Quorn, as his sister is seriously ill. Walty not well, he was driven to Port Augusta by Jack, taking Agnes and Iris. Mildred stayed home looking after baby Kevin.

April – The first day for a long time that neither a car, nor a truck was taken out of the shed at Pernatty Homestead. The motorbike was used.

May – Jack went to Adelaide from Bookaloo while Avis went to Monalena. Jack came back with Evelyn and her children Ruth and Glen. Jack took them to Bookaloo, four days later, to catch the train. On the 20th, A Dennis, T King and L Hacket gave notice to go Thursday to try to enlist, coming back until they are called up. On the 28th, Walter mentions that he 'heard the bad news that Belgium had surrendered, war news grave with British troops in a tight place'.

June – D J Greenfield came along from Roxby Downs Station and left his wife and two daughters at Pernatty, while he went to South Gap Station. They went back home five days later. Walter and Agnes went to Port Augusta, while C Ketteringham went to enlist. Italy declared war. On the 17th they heard the bad news that France had tried to make peace with Germany.

July – J Wilson, wife and child, left Pernatty to go Beltana way to work on a station. He finished up at Pernatty after two years and eight months. No fresh war news, only that HMAS Sydney sank an Italian ship.

August – A P Welk started on a kitchen for Jack and Avis on the verandah in front of their room. A Salvation Army captain came along on a bike and went onto Yeltacowie at night with Bill. Avis went to Monalena Station to her mother.

October – Jack went into Port Augusta to see his wife and new daughter. He went to Monalena at the end of the month to pick up Avis and Isabel and bring them back to Pernatty. Mildred, Colin, Kevin and Hurtle went to Yeltacowie.

December – Tom returned home on leave from Woodside camp until after Christmas.

1941

January – Walter, Agnes and Hurtle went to Corraberra and Port Augusta. When they came back on the 9th Bob and Jim came with them. Laurie's wife Mary is in hospital ill, having had a daughter Margaret Joy. Jack brought Agnes and Margaret Joy back to Pernatty to take care of her as Mary is still in hospital. Agnes took the baby to Yeltacowie for Minnie to look after for awhile.

February – E Naughton, schoolteacher, came from Corraberra to Pernatty to teach the children while Mary is away after her illness. Don came along to go to school. The store was used as a schoolroom.

March – On the 20th, Laurie and Mary came along from Corraberra to pick up some of their little family. On the 26th, the schoolteacher, Don, Bob and Jim returned to Corraberra on the mail to Bookaloo.

July – Jack went to Bookaloo to meet Tom returning home on his final leave. Tom and Agnes went to Yeltacowie in the Ford to take over some kero tins and visit them prior to Tom's departure. He left on the mail two days later. Walty, Mildred, Colin and Kevin came back from a holiday in Adelaide.

September – Walter, Agnes, Mildred and Kevin went to Corraberra for a couple of days. Agnes went to Adelaide on the 8th to attend a Women's Conference with the CWA. Avis in Port Augusta to have some teeth extracted, came back to Pernatty same night. Agnes came home 10 days later. George Greenfield brought Gran Greenfield out from South Gap to stay at Pernatty until 30th November.

October – Reg Starr came over from Yeltacowie very ill, but after two days was taken to Port Augusta by Walty, with Agnes and Mary Barber looking after him. He died early November in the hospital at 5.30 pm. 'An honest chap. He came to South Gap in 1919'.

December – Japan declared war against America and Great Britain on the 8th, while Australia declared war against Japan on the 9th. Walty went after Jack to bring him back to the homestead so he could take Avis to Port Augusta, due to the death of her mother. Have address for Tom in Darwin with battalion.

1942

January – Heard the Japanese had landed in New Guinea.

February – Allan Robins and Mrs Robins came through from Parakylia Station to spend the weekend at Pernatty then onto Port Augusta. Gertie Higgins was with them.

March – Mary Barber came over from Toby Swamp with her parents to help in and about the House, starting work next day. Finished up on the 27th May to go home and relieve her mother.

July – D J Greenfield passed through on his way to Port Augusta then onto Adelaide, taking Ernie with him. Heard that Gran Greenfield seriously ill. Mildred, Colin and Kevin went to Port Augusta with Walter and Walty. Mildred and the children were put on the train. C Dighton of Dalgety came out from the Port to see about the Mt Gunson property of D McSporran, to try to affect the sale of same.

August – Agnes went to Port Augusta to catch the afternoon train to see her very ill mother. Walter heard that the Commonwealth had approved the sale of Mt Gunson. Jas Hill in bed with the rheumatics. Walter went to Corraberra and Port Augusta to pick up Agnes from Adelaide. He then fixed up the papers in connection with the Mt Gunson property, then all returned to Pernatty. Kevin French ill after a bad cold. On the 23rd 'Gran', Mrs W H Greenfield, died at Calvary Hospital at 7 am, almost 20 years after William Henry Greenfield. She was buried at South Gap with William, aged 78 years, with all in attendance.

October – Bill heard the news he had another son on the 1st. Avis and Isabel came home on the mail with Jack. Walty took Malcolm into the doctor due to a nasty knock with a broom. Avis and Jas Hill went in with them. Walty and Jas returned two days later after Malcolm went into hospital. Avis returned much later. On the 22nd, Bill came to Pernatty in the afternoon, having had a telegram to say his wife Minnie, was ill. He then went to Quorn. Miss J McLean, Jim, Geof and Hurtle returned to Corraberra per Jack, Avis and Isabel, who returned to Pernatty two days later. Papers concerning Mt Gunson came along for signing, and then were sent to D McSporran. The transfer went through on the 3rd December.

November – Walty, Mildred and Colin took Kevin to Adelaide to see what could be done for him, returning to Pernatty two weeks later.

December – Christmas Day saw 24 people at Pernatty, while Walty and Allan Robins left to go to Port Augusta after dinner. Walter wrote at the end, 'The year going out with the Russians attacking strongly around Stalingrad and surrounding areas, pressing the Germans back. In Africa the 8th Army still chasing Rommell home to Tripoli, an army in French Africa building up. The French forces working with the Allies. Hopes of more victories in 1943'.

1943

February – Jas Hill became ill on the 2nd so Walter and Walty took him to Port Augusta to the hospital. Agnes and Colin went with them. He went into hospital on the 5th. 'Looks like a farewell to the bush'. The others went back to Pernatty on the 7th.

March – Tom came home from camp for a week. Walty and Colin went to Port Augusta to pick up Mildred and Kevin, coming back to Pernatty a couple of days later.

May - Walty cut his arm cleaning under the Woolshed. He and Colin went to Port Augusta to have three stitches inserted by Dr Thompson. Mildred, Kevin, Allan Robins, Mary Barber, Bob Parker, and R Butler went over to Yeltacowie to a children's birthday party.

August – Walter and Agnes went to Corraberra in the V8 Ford for Agnes to keep house while Mary goes to see about her eyes. Walter took the V8 to Butlers in a bad state. It needed a lot done to it so picked it up a week later. Allan Robins finished up at Pernatty to go down to Adelaide for his call up for the RAAF. Walter went to Port Augusta from Corraberra to fix up paper for Radio Transceiver. Jack

Robins came out on the mail to fix up about Allan's horses and things. Stayed with Walty and Mildred for two days then Walty, Mildred, Colin and Kevin took him back to Port Augusta. He took Allan's saddle and bridle and three dogs, leaving the two horses for later. Also with him was a letter for Mrs Robins with Allan's account, cheque and tax stamps.

September – Walter and Agnes heard that the Allies (British and Canadians) had invaded the Italian mainland on the toe of Italy. Six days later Italy had surrendered unconditionally. A step nearer the end.

October – Walter and Agnes discussed with all the sons, excepting Tom, arrangements for forming a partnership of properties.

December – Minnie and children went away by train from Bookaloo. Walty took his family to the Port for Kevin to be near the doctors through the summer, then he went back to Pernatty. Jack joined Avis and Isabel at Bookaloo for Christmas. Tom was in New Guinea.

1944

February – Walty went to Port Augusta to pick up Mildred, Colin and Kevin. Colin milked the cow. It seems to be his job to milk and look after the cows.

May – The Transceiver machine arrived from Adelaide. Walter sent an application to the Fuel Board for more petrol for V8 Ford truck.

June – Walter and Jack broke a 31/2 inch pipe to use as a mast for the Transceiver. Pulled up the aerial pole to about 51 feet 6 inches high already connected. An excitement in the History of Pernatty Station. On the 13th they tried to send a message to Nonning Station by transmitter but he could not hear. Nonning came through very clear. The first telegram was sent over the Transceiver on the 15th, to E A Heading (Evelyn) of Adelaide. The wireless pole

was put higher. Walter and Agnes went to Port Augusta on the 22nd on the way to Adelaide on business. On the 28th, Bill received first wire over Transceiver from Quorn.

July – 1st, Pernatty Pastoral Company started as from today. Partners are – Walter, Agnes, Laurie, Walty, Bill and Jack. Walter and Agnes returned from Adelaide and Port Augusta after completing business in reference to the partnership. Walty and Bill signed the Agreement for the Partnership.

September – Jack went into Bookaloo to meet with Mr and Mrs Traeger, who came up by the express. Mr Traeger had come to Pernatty to overhaul the Transceiver. They went back to Adelaide four days later. Jack, Avis and Isabel went down to Corraberra to help Laurie, who has not been at all well. Walter went too, and brought Isabel to Bookaloo to stay with her aunt. John Barber came into Pernatty to go down about his eyes. Walty took him and Mary to Bookaloo to catch the train.

October – Kevin John French's birthday on the 7th, he is five years old. Bob Parker celebrated his 21st birthday at Yeltacowie. The Pernatty people went over to it.

December – Walter and Agnes to Corraberra to see how things were, to visit the doctor again and fix up some transfer papers for Partnership. Walter, Agnes, Jim, Geof, Hurtle, and Mary Barber went back to Pernatty. Kevin is very ill. Walty took Mildred and Kevin into Port Augusta where the doctor sent him to the hospital. Agnes took Geof into the doctor due to a badly cut lip. Walter received a message to say Kevin's condition worse.

1945

January – Agnes and Geof returned to Bookaloo on the Tea and Sugar train. On the 25th Kevin John French passed away peacefully in Port Augusta at 4.30 pm. A bonny little chap. Mourned by all. Bill and Agnes went to the funeral next day. Walty, Mildred and Colin came back to Pernatty.

February – Walty and Agnes went to Port Augusta after tea, having had a message to say Mary French was seriously ill. Walty came back next day. Bill, Minnie and three children went to Quorn as two were starting school.

May – Germany surrendered unconditionally to Great Britain, Russia and the USA on the 8th. V E Day General Holiday on the 9th. Laurie had come up to get the children, Jim, Geof, Hurtle and Malcolm. They had been at Pernatty since 12th December, except Malcolm, who came on the 7th November. Teddy Goodwin (who used to be at the Woodforde with his family) passed away at Port Augusta Hospital on the 17th. Irwin Greenfield came along on his way to Quorn on the 28th to pick up Agnes to go to May French's funeral.

July – Walty took down the old guttering on the kitchen side of the House and replacing it with new ones. Jack took Mr and Mrs Heneke back to South Gap. They had spent a couple of days at Pernatty. Agnes, Avis, Colin, Isabel and Mary Barber went also. The Bishop of Willochra came to Pernatty and stayed the night. He christened Jack and Avis' second child Janice.

August – Walter went to Port Augusta in the Ford utility and took Mildred to her mother's place. Agnes came too, to go to Corraberra. The 15th was Victory Parade Day. The end of the war and fighting ceased.

October – Agnes in Naruma Hospital and underwent an operation by Dr Pellew. She got through it okay. Walty, Mildred and Colin went to Port Augusta to see Allan Robins who was home on leave.

December – Tom returned to Pernatty for his first trip after his discharge from the army. Bill took Minnie to the eye specialist in Quorn and to bring the children home. Agnes returned to Pernatty after trip to Adelaide and hospital. Twenty-five people at Pernatty for Christmas Day. The war ended during the year, something to be thankful for



Kevin (5 yrs old) & Colin (11 yrs old).

1946

January – Bert Barber and family left the Woodforde with all their goods and chattels and got as far as Yeltacowie. Walty got ready and went to Port Augusta for Colin to get his final diphtheria needle. The Barber family left Pernatty taking Mary, who finished up with her job. Bert took his team and all loose horses away with him from Pernatty, and got as far as South Gap woolshed. Mrs Barber, John, Don, Nellie and Jean went as well, as did Bob Parker. Walty and family returned to Pernatty from Port Augusta bringing Jim and Geof along for the holidays, and a dark girl, Mavis Davis to start work at the House. H J French passed away on the 20th at Murray Bridge aged 73. Walty and Mildred took Colin to Port Augusta to stay at his Grandma Robins for school. Jim and Geof returned to Corraberra.

June – Agnes and Tom went into the Port for Victory celebrations on the 9th, coming home on the 11th. Bill went to Quorn to stay for the races, taking Tom and Jack with him. When they came back to Port Augusta and Pernatty they brought John Barber with them, and Miss Kaye Crowe. Walter and Agnes went with Tom and Miss Crowe to go to the Port Augusta races. Walty went as well. Everybody came back a week later, but Walty, Mildred and Colin came home with a baby boy, Graham.

August – Tom went to Port Augusta to go onto Adelaide, to get his eye fixed up by the military. John Barber, Avis and Janice went with him as they were going to the doctor. Tom returned a week later. Walty started for Port Pirie taking Colin to school. Agnes went with them. On the 29th Tom and Agnes went to Port Augusta to attend the Soldiers Welcome Home, and the opening of the Town Hall.

September 30th – The Bishop of Willochra came to the station and confirmed Jack and christened Graham, three month old son of Walty and Mildred. He left the next day for Purple Downs Station.

November – Walty took Mildred to Port Augusta as her mother is very ill in hospital.

December – A lounge suite arrived for Agnes and was unpacked. Jack went to Woocalla for the Christmas tree, taking Gwen Starkey with him as she was going home. On Christmas Day all hands from Pernatty gathered at the homestead making 23 people altogether. Dinner and the company went well. Jack and family left for Bookaloo in the afternoon, taking the mail bags. Bill started for Yeltacowie after tea but broke down and returned per shanks pony about 2 am. Agnes was not at all well with the flu or bad cold.



Christmas Day at Pernatty Station, 1946.

Back Row: Ben Lawson, Jack, Walter, Mildred holding Graham & Walty French, Albert Ward, Bill French.

Middle: Tom & Avis French, Joan Farr, Minnie & Agnes French.

Front: Janice & Tommy French, Christine Lawson, Norma, Isabel, David, Denton, Geoff & Colin French.

Walter & Agnes' children not attending are Laurie French & Evelyn Heading.

1947

January – Walty varnishing the inside of his house. Agnes still unwell. Jack and family started away on their holiday trip to Bookaloo. Walter helped Tom to go to Port Augusta as Agnes needs to go to the doctors. She was sent to the hospital with bronchitis. Joan Farr went along to help Agnes. Tom and Joan came back on the 6th. Walter heard the news that most of the Corraberra children had the measles. On the 15th Walter heard that Agnes was coming out of hospital. She would stay in Port Augusta at the Western Hotel for awhile. Janice very sick on the 26th but brightened up during the day.

March – Laurie came along from port Augusta and brought Agnes home after being away for two months. A conference between all the members of the Partnership held to discuss matters. Settled satisfactorily to all.

May – Mrs E A Greenfield passed away at Palmer aged 74. To be buried at Purple Downs Station. Agnes went to Purple Downs to attend Aunt Edie's funeral on the 10th, and came back with George Greenfield. A birthday party was held at Pernatty on the 17th with 79 people attending, coming from the surrounding district and Adelaide.

August – Tom went over to Mt Gunson in the utility taking 20 bags of cement, an oven and cooler case. Agnes, Jack, and Ernie Ash went too. Tom fixed his car up during the week for the trip to Sydney. On the 26th he went to Port Augusta on his way to be married.

October – Tom returned to Pernatty with his wife on the 15th, and then went to Mt Gunson to live there, taking some of his things with him.

December – Tom took his wife to Woocalla to catch the train. Mr Butterworth and Laurie came to Pernatty from Port Augusta in connection with an offer from

Dalgety. Ken Sultan came along from the Port having been sent out by Laurie. He started work at £2/2/- per week. A party from Pernatty went to Woocalla for the Christmas tree. Walty and family went away to Port Augusta for Christmas. Bill and family went to Wilmington while Tom and Kay came along to Pernatty late at night, due to a breakdown. Jack took Walter and Agnes to Port Augusta on the 26th, and next day they went out with Walty and Bill to inspect Mundallio Station, buying it on behalf of the Pernatty Pastoral Company for £12,000. They considered the proposition fairly good buying, especially the hilly country. Agnes and Mary viewed the property as well. The transfer papers for Mundallio were signed on the 16th January 1948, by Walter, Agnes and Jack at Dalgety.

1948

February – Gerald Dawson, a state boy, came on the mail to go to Yeltacowie to work, starting on the 6th at 30/- per week. Colin ran a bone into his foot at the Woolshed while yarding the sheep. Heard from Dalgety that consent from the Federal government, for the transfer of Mundallio, had been received. Walter, Agnes and Walty to Port Augusta and Corraberra, to go to Mundallio next day to inspect the sheep, and bought them subject to transfer at 44/-, count on delivery, as well as two cows and two heifers at £35, same terms as the sheep. They all went back to Pernatty two days later.

March – Bob McCoy started at Mundallio on the 20th at £1/-/- per week. Jack is packing up his goods and chattels and loading them onto H Rowe's truck, ready for a start next day. On the 21st Jack helped load his furniture and other goods, starting away to look after Mundallio Station, with Avis, Isabel and Janice. A good gap in the staff.

May – Tom went to Port Augusta as Kay is not well. He returned the next day, having left his wife in Port Pirie, and bringing Hurtle and Malkie back with him. Mrs

A Kinnear and Gwen came out on the mail to stay at Walty's place while holidays were on. Walty, Mildred and Graham took them into Bookaloo to catch the fast goods train.

June – Edmund Willie French died suddenly on the 12th, at about 5 pm. A battler to the last. Walter, Agnes and Walty went to Port Augusta to attend the funeral, coming home two days later. Walter and Walty went to South Gap woolshed to meet George Greenfield about the mail contract now that Herbie Row would not be doing it. George promised to give a subsidy of £25/-/- over and above the contract price, which we can obtain.

August – Three men from South Australian Museum went through enroute to the Woodforde, looking for specimens. Tom got the truck and picked up a Freelite from Stan Sullivan and came home to Mt Gunson late at night.

October – Mildred and Mrs Daw got up a birthday party for Joan Farr, and all the hands had tea in the dining room at the House.

December – Fred Kluge died in Port Augusta Hospital after a long illness. A good chap who worked, at one time, on Pernatty. A stainless steel sink came on the mail for Agnes and some Christmas goods. H Daw put the sink in, put up the blinds on the front verandah, and helped about the place. Tom went to Mundallio to spend Christmas with his wife Kay, Jack, Avis, Isabel and Janice.

1949

January - Tom had a message to say that his wife Kay had gone into hospital, and went to Port Augusta taking Hurtle and Malkie with him. Later a son was born, Tony. Walter, Agnes, Walty, Bill, Tom, Laurie and Jack, partners of Pernatty Pastoral Company, held a meeting to discuss matters concerning the carrying on of the stations under the company's control. We decided to place £3,700 in the

Reserve Fund, also Partners salary to be £40 per month. Also, recommended to get a tractor for Pernatty end, and a 30 cwt truck for Mundallio and Corraberra end. All agreed. Colin's birthday party was held on the 29th. The bricks for Walty's house came from Mt Gunson for the extension.

February – Tom returned from Port Augusta after picking up Kay and son Tony. Chick and Don Daw are putting a part of the verandah of Walty's house at the front. It was completed on the 18th. Bob and Joan Farr got bad news of their father's death and went to the Port. They came back five days later.

April – Walty took Mildred and Graham to the Port. Mildred to be away for a time. While she was away for three weeks Walty put lino down in one room and the passage, also fixing other areas of the house. Walty went to Port Augusta to pick Mildred and Graham up on the 27th.

May – Bill Merrill, his wife and two children came along for two days, then left for South Gap on their way to Port Augusta. On the 21st, Bill started his way to the Port with his visitors, Mr and Mrs Elliot, two children, and A Watson who was ill. He got as far as Whittata when his generator cut out and they stayed the night. It was a worrying day for Walter on the 22nd, as Walty had started for Whittata in the green car but got stuck just the other side of the Willows when that car broke down, so he had to walk back to the homestead. Albert Ward was then sent on horse with a packhorse to take food and a generator. He arrived at 1 pm with food for a hungry crowd. They got to Port Augusta two days after they had begun their journey. Agnes was ill on the 29th and stayed in bed most of the day.

June – Mr Plunkett from Coopers came along to inspect and arrange about a lighting plant. Mr Steve Healy, of broadcasting station 5AU, came along for a trip.

September – Agnes had been in bed with a bad leg so H Daw took her to the Port Augusta Hospital and was in for 10 days. She came out of hospital and settled

into the Western Hotel on Port Augusta West. She remained there for a month. Mr I R McTaggart flew around South Gap, Pernatty and Yeltacowie. He came down very low close to Walty's home and circled around, also around Todd's Dam.

October – Messrs Whitford and Oakey of the Roads Department, came out and went onto Yeltacowie to inspect the roads with an idea of getting them done but, could not give any hope of them being done in the near future, admitting that it was necessary to do something to the roads later. Joan Farr finished up and went away on the mail after being here for several years.

November – Tom went to Wirrappa to have his nipper treated for whooping cough. Walty put lino down in the pantry at the House. He got Agnes' new Simpson washing machine out and started.

December – Colin took Agnes to South Gap woolshed to meet up with the South Gap people for a trip to Angorichina. However, Walter heard that the trip was a bad turn out as most of the passengers developed Ptomaine poisoning and could not carry out the whole trip. Agnes returned from Adelaide two weeks later on the Express right through to Bookaloo. Although Agnes prepared for Christmas she took ill on the Eve putting in a bad night. There were only six people at Pernatty Christmas Day, being Walter, Agnes, Tom, Kay, Tony and Zena Ward. Tom and family returned to Mt Gunson next day but Walter felt it was a blessing they were there to help Agnes as she was so ill.



Mildred, Colin, Graham standing in front of Walty, and Geof 1949.

1950

February – Bill had an unexpected trip to Port Augusta with Minnie who had a badly cut finger. Walty rushed Mildred over to Yeltacowie to help with the emergency. Walter's brother John Herbert, with his wife Sadie, came to Pernatty in their van to work, Sadie to cook at the House and John with any of the work going on around the place. Both to be paid £3/17/- each per week, until June when they go back. Walty, Mildred and Graham took Mrs Robins to the Burra. Agnes left Pernatty to go on a tour with the Country Women, to Sydney and Canberra, and would be away for two weeks. Colin drove the car and Walter went with them. Next day Colin and Walter drove Agnes over to Mrs Bishop's place at Melrose. Walty, Mildred and Graham came back from Burra to pick up Jack Robins, to take him there, as his wife is very ill. On the 22nd Coopers expert got

the lighting plant going with Walter turning on the first light at the House. Walty's house would be done the next day.

May – Colin went to the Port in the Ford Pilot and took Agnes in on her way to Don French's wedding in Adelaide. Agnes came back a week later.

July – Walty, Mildred and Graham left for Port Augusta for raceweek, taking Miss Deane of Yeltacowie, with them. Tom, Kay and Tony also went. Colin was cleaning and straightening up the office and store. He also helped his Grandma (Agnes) with the cooking at the House. Walter had not been feeling well so was resting and listening to the wireless. Colin was laid up with the mumps from the 8th to the 17th. Walter, Agnes, Walty, Mildred, Colin and Graham went to Port Augusta to see the film 'Bitter Springs'.

August – Bill, Minnie and Norma went through to Quorn with a complaint he has. Tom at Mt Gunson but was called away to Broken Hill as Kay's brother accidentally killed. Jack had come up from Mundallio to inform them. Agnes, Mrs Barrett and Pansy went out with Walter to see the wildflowers between the House and the Woolshed. Walty and Graham went into Port Augusta with gastric flu. They came home from Jack Robin's place 10 days later. Both Walter Agnes became unwell with the flu but only Agnes came to the Port to see the doctor, going into hospital as she also had other troubles. She stayed for three weeks.

October - Walter and Tom went to Mundallio in the Land Rover as it was too wet for the car, and arrived at midnight. They had a look at Octavius' property which adjoined Mundallio but did not bother with it.

November – Walter, Walty, Mildred, Colin and Graham went to port Augusta in the Land Rover as it was very wet. Walter and Colin stayed at Mundallio while the others stayed at Mr Robins at Davenport North. Walter, Walty and Colin went out

to see the Ranch at the 'Kangaroo' film set; afterwards everyone went back to Pernatty.

December – Walter and Colin stayed the night at Mundallio, did some business in the Port next day, then drove out to Corraberra for lunch. They had a look at the 'Kangaroo' film people, windmill and tank where they intend to film some of their scenes, and tanks and troughs where the cattle will be watered. They then went back to Pernatty. There were 17 people for Christmas dinner, very quiet. Walter wrote at the very end that, '1950 dying out with war clouds looming darkly over Korea. Rumbly all over the world'.

1951

January – Bob Farr came home from Port Augusta, mostly suffering from a recovery and gave notice he is leaving. Walter paid him off and he left in his car. 'No dependence to be put on Bob. Just as likely to pick up his things at any moment'. Walty fixed a fence from the store to the washhouse.

February – Colin went to the doctor having had a burn on his arm. He was still laid up with it a week later, as a gathering came up following the burn. It took a month to heal.

August – Walter got some letters away with Walty who was going to the Port. One letter was to Laurie that may alter the course of the Partnership. Walter had talks with Tom over Partnership affairs. He gave the writer to understand that he was selling out of the Partnership as soon as possible.

October – Walty got a message to Port Augusta Ambulance to come to Pernatty as Walter took ill at 8 am. He was taken to the hospital. The ambulance was driven by Keith Moore while Agnes and Mildred went in it to assist. Walter and

Agnes went to Mundallio when he left hospital until the 16th December, when Walty, Mildred, Colin and Graham brought them back to Pernatty.

1952

January – Walty and Mildred went to Port Augusta to interview married couples and engaged Mr and Mrs John McDonald at £13 per week. They came up on the Budd car to Bookaloo three days later. Mrs McDonald started in the kitchen while Walter and Walty showed John around.

March – Colin and Geof went to Port Augusta to be examined for National Service call up. On the 21st April Walty, Mildred and Graham took Colin, Geof and Don Keane to Port Augusta on the way to training camp. The boys left for Woodside the next day.

June – Walty, Mildred and Graham went to Port Pirie to meet Colin and Geof coming to Port Augusta for weekend leave. The boys left on the Budd car two days later to go back to Woodside. The film 'Kangaroo' is showing in Port Augusta and the family go to see it.

July – Colin, Geof and Don come back to Pernatty after finishing National service training for three months.

1953

January – Gerald Dawson left for Port Augusta on the way to Woodside training camp, returning on the 24th April. Geof shod his horse and went to bed with measles for a week. Walty and Colin putting in slabs of cement in the backyard of Walty's place. Tom took Tony to Port Augusta for tonsil operation. Walty and Mildred went to pick up the governess and her small daughter from Port Augusta. They also brought back Mr and Mrs McDonald and Malcolm.

February – Agnes is back in hospital. Walter stayed at Mundallio. Walty went back to Pernatty to get clothes for them and took down.

March – Baby girl born to Tom and Kay.

May – Geof drove Walter and Agnes to Bookaloo to be met by Tom who took them to Port Augusta. They returned home three days later bringing Isabel. Walty, Mildred, Graham, Mrs Morton and daughter, and Pansy Wilson, went to Port Augusta for holidays, returning three weeks later. Colin went to Bookaloo to pick up Bert and Mabel.

June – Don, Joan and Patricia came up from Gardiners during the day and returned at night. Colin took the Land Rover to Port Augusta to get new piston rings put in. Mildred, Graham, Mrs Morton and Beth, also went with him.

August – Walty took Mildred to Port Augusta after receiving telegram to say her mother was in hospital. Mrs E M Robins passed away at 5.15 pm on the 29th. Walter and Agnes went with them to see Walter Greenfield, who died in the same hospital on 3rd September.

September - On the 7th, Walty, Mildred and Bill went from Yeltacowie, up through Arcoona, Purple Downs and Roxby Downs to Parakylia Station to attend the funeral of the late W J P Greenfield. On the 11th, Walty took Mrs Morton and Beth to Port Augusta for the holidays, and also see about getting a new cook. Walty returned on the 13th. Mr and Mrs McDonald finished up. Colin took them to Port Augusta to take up a job at Commonwealth Hill Station. Colin and Lena Mack had X-Ray examination. On the 23rd, Mr and Mrs Henderson from Clare, brought their daughter Mrs Morton, and granddaughter Beth, back to Pernatty after holidays.

November – Tom returned to Mt Gunson to pack away his goods and will return to Adelaide to have his neck in plaster for six months. He left days later in a caravan.

December – Bill sent in his written notice of six months to dispose his share in Pernatty Pastoral Company. Walty took Mildred, Mrs Morton and Beth to the Port for holidays and saw about the buckboard and the pipeline. Walty returned next day with Mildred and Kenny Robins.

1954

January – Walty, Mildred and Graham went to Port Augusta so that Walter and Agnes could go to the doctors. Walter and Walty had a meeting in Dalgety's office with Laurie who wanted to take over Corraberra. All went home on the 20th.

March – Colin took Mildred, Graham, Mrs Morton and Beth to Port Augusta on the way to Whyalla to see the Queen. Brian and Rita Joslyn, along with Lena Mack, took the Land Rover to the Port for repairs and onto Whyalla to see the Queen. Bill, Denton and Minnie went to the Port via Mt Gunson, on the way to Whyalla as well. All returned on the 21st. Brian and Rita returned via Roopena Station in a taxi driven by Bob Kay.

April – Walty took Mildred, Graham, Mrs Morton and Beth to Port Augusta to go to Adelaide to see the Coronation Robes, on the 13th. They came back on the 18th. South Gap people came out to see the pictures that Colin took. They included Mr and Mrs Greenfield, Mr and Mrs Keith Place and son Ian, Mr and Mrs Keith Jones, Mr and Mrs Menzies, Eric Greenfield and Bernie Hawker. Graham went to hospital on the 21st to have his tonsils out.

May – Walter, Agnes, Walty, Bill, Laurie and Jack had meeting of the Partners with Messrs Wastell, Hart and Butterworth of Dalgety, and agreed to buy Bill out of Pernatty on a 'straight-out' basis.

June – Walty took Walter and Agnes to Port Augusta, Agnes went to hospital while Walter stayed at Mundallio. Walter, Jack and Mr Butterworth of Dalgety,

came up to Pernatty to see Bill to get his idea of how Provisional Tax should be paid on his retirement from the Partnership. It was to go towards paying Bill's tax to June 30, 1954. On the 26th, Walter, Agnes and Jack went from Mundallio to Oakden Hills Station to see the Governor of South Australia, Sir Robert George. From Pernatty went Walty, Mildred, Graham, Tony, Colin, Geof, Tom Parkinson, Bob Darley, Mrs Morton and Beth, Bill Minnie and Denton. Bill retired as Partner on the 30th.

July – Walty and Geof went to Port Augusta in the utility to be godfathers to Don and Joan's twin boys, Max and Ray.

August – Meeting of the Partners with Walter, Agnes, Walty, Tom, Jack and Laurie, with Laurie voluntarily selling his share to remaining partners for £30,000. Bill had permanently left Pernatty on the 7th. Walter received word that Mr Butterworth from Dalgety, had passed away on the morning of the 28th. R J McLean and family moved their furniture into Yeltacowie.

October – Ken Kingdom arrived to work on Pernatty on a motor bike, coming from Gardiners. Walty took Walter and Agnes to the Port for checkup at doctors. All returned a week later bringing also Grace Mortlock as housemaid, and T B Clark as cook, for the House.

November – Hurtle French left Corraberra to work in the Commonwealth offices, Port Augusta. Colin went to the Port to have some teeth out, taking Mildred, Graham, Mrs Morton and Beth with him. Messrs Rex Patterson and H Holmes came out and stayed the night. Mr Holmes was coming on his first visit before taking over Dalgety in the Port. They continued to Roxby Downs and Parakylia Stations via Mt Gunson next day, but had car trouble so went back to Port Augusta. Graham Pitts came from the Port Augusta Flying Doctor Base, and fixed the transceiver so it would work on its signal.

December – Tom went to the Port to have a look at the house at Corraberra before shifting in. he went back to Mt Gunson and started packing. A week later he had loaded most of his furniture and left with his family for Corraberra. By the 16th, he had moved all his furniture down there with the help of Walty and Colin. In the meantime, Mr and Mrs John McDonald and son Malcolm, arrived to look after Mt Gunson. On the 17th, Walty took Mildred, Mrs Morton and Beth, to Port Augusta as the governess was leaving for Gawler.

1955

January – Charlie Ketteringham came back for a visit after 15 years away, and stayed a few days. On the 15th, Walty and family went to Port Augusta to see the doctor and went to Corraberra for Tony's birthday next day. Colin and Mildred went to the Port in the Austin truck, picked up Mrs Morton and Beth, then went back to Pernatty. On the 29th, John McDonald and family of Mt Gunson, J McLean and family of Yeltacowie, Eric Greenfield, Pat Reid, Maxine Hall and Rob Greenfield from South Gap, came over for Colin's 21st birthday tea. Colin took Mrs Morton and Beth back to the Port on the 2nd February.

March – Walty went to Mt Gunson to help John McDonald to rig up a Freelite and put new lino down in sitting room. Walty, Mildred and Graham went to the Port to meet the new governess Miss J Barton, and returned to Pernatty.

April – John McLean and family went to Port Augusta for Easter. Mesdames H Hull, F French, Zeta McBride, Freda, Messrs Surman, McBride, Gary Surman and Don French came up for Easter. Colin went to Purple Downs Station to see Mrs Morton and returned to Pernatty three days later. Harry Winton, John Merrill and John Ashton came around on a hunting trip with a car and trailer. Everybody went to Old Pernatty for Easter Day.

May – Walty took Colin to the Port to catch the train to go to Gawler.

July – Walty, Mildred, Graham, Miss Burton, Mrs Clark and Grace Mortlock went to Port Augusta for the races. Walty attended the opening of the Flying Doctor base at the Port. They all returned to Pernatty four days later. Walty took Colin to the Port and brought back the Land Rover from Davenport Motors. Colin went to the doctors about his poisoned leg then went onto Gawler. He returned three days later bringing Walter, Agnes and Aunt Florrie French with him. All hands from Pernatty went to Yeltacowie for a surprise party for John McDonald.

August – Colin took Walter, Agnes and Grace to Port Augusta, bringing back Mrs Morton and Beth, as well as a shearer, with him. On the 27th Walter, Agnes, Walty, Tom and Jack met Mr Hart of Dalgety, to fix up agreement so as each partner has equal share in Partnership. Colin took Mrs Morton and Beth back to the Port.

October – Geof drove Walter, Agnes, Mrs Clark and Grace to Port Augusta to attend the first trotting meeting in the town on the 22nd. Colin drove to Gawler in the Utility coming back on the 24th. On the 30th, Joe Davies had a bad fall on the motor bike and had to be taken away on the utility, driven by Colin, to meet the ambulance coming from Port Augusta. Mildred had cleaned Joe's wounds and went with them. They met the ambulance at Bookaloo.

November – Colin went to Bookaloo to get Mrs Morton on the 16th, taking her back to Port Augusta with Mildred and Miss Burton, to have teeth out on the 21st.

December – Colin went to Port Augusta after tea on the 22nd, coming back on the 28th. Walty attended meeting of partners on the 29th to try and alter the Agreement and split up the Partnership. He gave notice of his retirement from it but, Walter would not accept it.

1956

January – John Mc Donald and family went on holiday. J McLean gave notice they were leaving Yeltacowie on February 10. Walter and Walty met the partners of Pernatty Pastoral Company with Messrs Nolan and Hart of Dalgety, to try and settle some agreement to split the partnership with not much success. Colin took Agnes to Port Augusta for Golden wedding party for Mr and Mrs Jack Hall.

February 7th – Walter, Agnes and Walty attended a meeting of the partners of PPC in Port Augusta with Messrs Hart, Patterson and Holmes of Dalgety present, and decided on the dissolution of the Partnership. Walter, Agnes and Walty would take Pernatty, Tom to have Corraberra, and Jack to have Mundallio. Walty, Mildred and Graham met the new governess, Miss Hennessey.

March – Colin went to Bookaloo to meet Mrs Morton on the 27th and took her back on the 2nd April.

May – Colin to Bookaloo for the mail and goods, picking up Isabel French and Fay Edwards for the school holidays.

June – Colin took the truck to Port Augusta, then went onto Gawler for the holidays, coming back to Pernatty on the 18th driving the Land Rover back. Walty took Walter and Agnes to Port Augusta along with Grace. Walty went home that night with the others coming home a week later.

July – Colin took Walter and Agnes to Port Augusta and out to Mundallio. He also brought down the cook and her husband (O'Loughlins). Walty, Walter and Colin went to see a shearing demonstration with a Cooper shearing table. The O'Loughlins were on the wine in Port Augusta and gave a minutes notice, they went back to Pernatty and packed up their furniture, leaving on Fred Digance's truck. On the 27th, Walty, Mildred, Graham and Miss Hennessey went to the Port

to see Norma French marry Pat Greenfield. Colin took Walter and Agnes to the wedding.

August – Colin went to Bookaloo and met Mrs Morton and Mrs Don Shaw on the 21st, taking them back to Port Augusta along with Miss Hennessey, and Mr and Mrs Gray, on the 5th September.

November – Colin went to Port Augusta to pick up Mrs Morton from the train station. She stayed at Pernatty for a month.

December – Walty signed papers to settle the Dissolution of February 29th. There were 13 people at the House for Christmas Day.

1957

January – Walty, Colin and Walter went to Port Augusta to pick up Agnes on the 17th. Colin went onto Gawler, coming back on the 20th. Tom took a load of furniture to Port Augusta for Walter and Agnes, as they were packing up at Pernatty. On the 25th, Colin drove Walter and Agnes to the Port as they were to live at 67 Hospital Road. Tom took another load of furniture to the Port, while Walty and Colin fixed up the mail contract.

February – Walty, Mildred and Agnes went to Gawler from Port Augusta, as did Colin and Graham. On the 9th, Colin married Ina Morton, at the Methodist Church in Willaston, in the morning. The best man Geof got married in North Adelaide, in the afternoon. Walty, Mildred, Graham and Agnes attended that one as well. on the 10th, Walty and family returned from Gawler via Whitwarta, and brought Margaret Hennessey back with them. Walty then shifted furniture from his house into the big House, with Tom and Ray helping him. Walty's old house was then painted in readiness for Colin, Ina and Beth when they arrived at Pernatty on the 27th.

March – Messrs W Linkson and L Gillespie brought the Sapphire car from Adelaide and took the Ford Pilot away. The Masons were working on the buildings, cottage, laundry, and putting the floor in to the meat house.

On Good Friday, Walty, Mildred, Graham, Colin, Ina, Beth, Mrs McCourt, Miss Hennessey, Ken and Hans, took goods and sheep to Shore Hill and had a picnic back around South Eliza.

June – Walty went to Port Augusta to see the doctor for a medical examination for insurance purposes, while Colin took Beth to the hospital to see the physio, Miss Thompson. Canadian Dave McKay came to Pernatty to work. Walty picked him up from Bookaloo. Walty and Mildred took Miss Hennessey to Port Augusta Hospital with asthma.

August – J McDowall brought a married couple, Allen Moore and family, for Yeltacowie and took them along with Walty. Ken went Bookaloo to get Bruce Headley to start work at Pernatty.

September – G W Greenfield was found shot in the head at South Gap Station. It was an accidental shooting and was buried at the South Gap cemetery two days later. Tom and Ray took the truck to Mazalyns to get Mrs Parkinson to cook at the homestead. They came back next day bringing their mother, sister Glenice, and a load of furniture. Walty went to Bookaloo for the mail and goods, and for Graham to get his first polio needle.

October – Frank Parkinson came by car to work about the place. Ken Kingdom got the ration sheep, chased three sheep into the yard and around the flat. They were unfit for killing, so he laid in the hut for the rest of the morning. He was given notice and left Pernatty for Port Augusta. Walty took Mildred, Graham, Grace and Miss Hennessey to the Port to see the Irish Guard band. Colin, Ina and Beth also

went along. Miss Hennessey went on a four day long holiday. Tom, Bruce, Dave and Frank went out to pick wild peaches (quondongs).

December – Walty, Mildred, Graham, Miss Hennessey, Colin, Ina, and Beth went into Port Augusta for the premiere of 'Robbery under Arms'. Graham had his second polio needle while Beth had her first at Bookaloo. Mildred and Ina went to the Port on the way to Adelaide on the 16th, while Miss Hennessey went on holidays and would be back on the 1st February. Mildred and Ina came back five days later.

1958

February – The McDonald's gave notice to leave to go to Oakden Hills Station as a married couple, leaving eight days later. They were visited by Tom, Ray, Dave, Mr and Mrs Parkinson, and Glenice a fortnight later for the day. The Wades came as a married couple for Yeltacowie, while Allen Moore and family moved from Yeltacowie to Mt Gunson. Allen rode his horse there.

April – Walty, Mildred, Graham and Miss Hennessey went to Port Augusta. Ron Wade and family went to Jamestown. Everyone came back to Pernatty next day. Mr Darwin came around with a book mobile, with books at 1/- each on loan.

May – Walty, Mildred, Graham, Miss Hennessey and Mrs Ann Bell (Mildred's sister) went down to Burgoyne's Swamp to get some Sturt Peas. Next day, Walty and Mildred took Ann to Port Augusta on the way back to Adelaide while Miss Hennessey went to hospital with asthma. Ina took Beth to Port Augusta Hospital to have an operation for appendicitis at 7 pm. Mrs Parkinson went with them and returned with Walty. Colin came in from the Woodforde to follow them in. he returned two days later.

June – Walty received a telegram to say that Walter is seriously ill and went to Port Augusta, up to the hospital to see him, coming home the next day. Parkinson's went to Bookaloo for a day outing with Dave, Bruce and Bob Crotty. They brought back an old 1930 Ford Model A car. Allen Moore's brother came to Mt Gunson to see him. Allen gave notice to leave on the Friday week to go back to Nonning. Colin left Port Augusta to go to Gawler in his new station wagon Ford Vanguard, purchased from A McMullen.

September – J Purcell, who had started work in August, was helping with work about the Woolshed. He was given notice to leave for carrying drink to the shearers and hanging on the rails too much while others were working. Isabel, Janice, Alvis Boots, and Tony Miller came up from Mundallio for an outing. Messrs Rob and Jim Coulthard came to Pernatty to erect a headstone on Coulthard's grave at Old Pernatty for the 100th anniversary of his death. They then erected a fence around the site.

October – Walty and family, and Colin and family went to Port Augusta for Isabel's and Tony's engagement party. Ten days later Walty and Mildred went to the Port after receiving word of Mary French's death, going to the funeral the next day.

November – Walty, Mildred and Graham went to Port Augusta in the Sapphire as Miss Hennessey left for Balaklava after three years at Pernatty, Graham having finished Correspondence School. Mr and Mrs Parkinson finished up and went to Port Augusta.

December – On Christmas Day, Colin went to Bookaloo to meet Mr and Mrs Jim Madigan and brought the mailbag to Pernatty. Colin, family and visitors went up around South Eliza and the Woodforde for the day.

1959

January – Walty, Mildred, Graham, Ina, Beth and Kenny Robins went to Burgoyne's for a picnic with the South Gap people. Dally Hogg came from Charlie's looking for a job as a married couple, then went to Port Augusta to get his wife and child. They started work two days later.

February – All hands went over to South Gap for Bob Greenfield's 20th birthday.

April – Colin, Ina and Beth went to Port Augusta to pick up the governess, Miss Fisher, from the train. Walty and Mildred went to the Port for the races and Denton's 21st birthday party. Colin and family went too.

May – Walty, Mildred, Colin, Ina, Beth, Mr and Mrs Hogg, Dave, Bruce, and Ray went down near Hesso to a barbecue in aid of the Flying Doctor Service. Colin and family left for Gawler on holidays. Bruce went with them then, onto Western Australia, for his holidays. Colin and family returned to Pernatty on the 31st.

July – Walty went to Port Augusta to see Walter, who was back in hospital.

September – Mildred went down to Hospital Road to help Agnes look after Walter, staying for a month. Colin, Ina and Beth went to Gawler as Ina had won a trip to Sydney. Beth is staying with grandparents, Mr and Mrs Henderson. They all return back to Pernatty a week later.

October – Walty took Bruce into Port Augusta Hospital with a poisoned leg from kangaroo tick bites. Walty went into South Gap as an old chap, Tom Arnold, shot himself at Tiffen Hut.

November – Walter is ill again, with Mildred to help Agnes to look after him. The illness continued throughout December with Walty coming down to see his father frequently.

1960

On the 16th of January, Walter David French passed away at 5 am. He was buried at Port Augusta Cemetery on the 18th with the attendance of all staff from Pernatty except for Len Faulkner and Ron Wade. Ina and Beth went to YMG in the Vanguard for the day.

February – Messrs H Holmes and H Watt of Dalgety came to start valuations on the station around the homestead and the Willows, Woodforde, North and South Eliza, Hogan's Ghost, Sells, Mahomets, Emu Bluff, Mt Gunson, Hard Struggle and Toby Swamp. It took three days for it to be done then they went back to Port Augusta. Walty had first airplane ride with Capt. Dennis, having a look around the homestead, the Willows and the Woolshed.

March – Mr and Mrs Faulkner moved to the cottage at Pernatty, she as cook, he as handyman, as the Wade's had given notice and left. Allen Moore and family came back to Yeltacowie to work.

April – Jim Barrett came to Mt Gunson to start work. Fred Digance brought his furniture from Port Augusta. Walty went to Yeltacowie with the Dalgety men to inspect blown down buildings for insurance claim. Walty, Mildred, Colin, Ina and Beth attended Isabel's and Tony's wedding.

July – a party of Mines Department men went out to the Woodforde looking for oil sites. Colin took Ina to Gawler. Ina stayed for a month as Beth was going in for spinal surgery at the Adelaide Children's Hospital.

October – Colin went to Gawler as a son, Leslie Walter, was born on the 21st, at the Hutchison Hospital. Walty and Mildred had received a telegram.

November – Colin went to Gawler to pick up Ina and Leslie. The car broke down on the way back. Faulkners finished up and went to places unknown.

December – Colin and family went to Gawler for Christmas for three days. On Pernatty for Christmas Day, there were Walty, Mildred, Graham and Cliff Holden, and the Barrett's at Mt Gunson.

1961

February – Colin took the family for Leslie's christening, afterwards bringing Walty, Mildred, Graham, and Allen Moore's children back to Pernatty, due to Walty's car, the Sapphire, having a cracked transmission case. Three days later, Colin went back to the Port to pick up Ina, Beth, Leslie and the governess.

March – Walty, Mildred and Graham went to Port Augusta for several weeks to see Agnes in hospital as she had had a stroke. On the 13th, Agnes passed away at 2 pm, and was buried two days later at the Port Augusta Cemetery with all in attendance.

April – Mr and Mrs Holmes of Dalgety came up for Easter and stayed for five days. Walty took Mrs Moore and her baby to Port Augusta to see the doctor during the night.

May – Mr and Mrs Mitchell brought Jean, Patricia, Max and Ray to Pernatty, where they went with Don to North Eliza after he came in for goods and water. Walty and Colin went to Adelaide to try and get something done in Estate affairs. Colin stayed in Gawler with his family and in-laws for five days, while Walty went back to Pernatty. On the 28th Walty, Mildred, Graham, Colin, Ina, Beth, Leslie, Miss Brennan, Dave, Bob, Cliff, and Mr and Mrs Taylor, went down around Toby Swamp and McGregor for a picnic.

June – Dave finished up at Pernatty and left for Port Augusta. Colin and Bob were plastering the hot water system chimney and building water system at Colin's place. On the 20th Walty and Colin went to Adelaide then came back to Port

Augusta to see a lawyer about the Walter David French Estate. Mr and Mrs Taylor left for Bourke to see his mother who was very ill. They came back a month later. Colin, Graham, Bob, John and Cliff played tennis whenever they could on the weekends.

July – Mr Johns and partner were having a look around Yeltacowie for the mines department.

August – Mr and Mrs Henderson, Ina's parents, came up for a visit from Gawler. Messrs Holmes and Watt came along to see about insurance policies on the House site. Walty took Dennis Turner to see the doctor in Port Augusta for a busted thumb. Charlie Absalom was building shelves in the storeroom, which took three days to do.

September – Bob Crotty finished at Pernatty due to drinking metho from the store and left for Port Augusta, with Bill Taylor driving him there.

December – Colin was welding pipes together to make a fowlhouse. He also fixed the starter on the lighting plant, and then fixed side poles onto the fowlhouse, before meeting Ina who was coming from Port Augusta. Mr Darwin called in with his book mobile. Christmas Day saw Walty, Mildred, Graham, Colin, Ina, Beth, Leslie, Mr and Mrs Taylor, John and Dennis at Pernatty, the Moore family at Yeltacowie, and the Barrett family at Mt Gunson.



Walter & Agnes 1959. Agnes 1960.



Chapter Three

Drought on Pernatty Station

The area where Pernatty Station is situated is susceptible to drought. Drought is a constant in South Australia and Australia in general. Pastoralists, in order to ensure their livelihood, must carefully husband the water which falls to ensure they have enough for domestic use and stock. Strong winds and dust storms are inevitable and heavy rains cause environmental damage. Drought makes employment difficult in the pastoral areas of South Australia's North West yet pastoral properties, such as Pernatty Station, have survived drought, albeit with great difficulty.

On a pastoral property, getting water is not just a question of turning on a tap. Water must be found, stored and transported to where it is needed. Without water, stock die, land is degraded, and the property becomes unsustainable. Therefore, the finding, storage and movement of water become paramount in ensuring the socio-economic sustainability of a pastoral property. One dramatic example of the effects of ongoing drought was the fate of Anna Creek Station, a Kidman & Company property in the far north of South Australia. Anna Creek is the largest cattle station in the world (24,000 square kilometres) which formerly had 19,500 cattle. Drought had caused this station to be destocked, with the cattle being sold or moved to other properties.⁶ If a large pastoral company such as Kidman and Company with so many resources struggled with drought, then a smaller pastoral company lacking those resources would struggle financially. The reason Pernatty Station, and other pastoral properties in the area, exist is to run sheep and cattle. Originally, in the late nineteenth century, the South Australian Government wanted all land in the state to be utilized. The Government stipulated just how many sheep were to be pastured on a property. The Government vastly

⁶ Dan Box, 'Water dries up with life on the land' *The Australian* 13 September 2008, p.5.

overestimated the number of animals the land could sustain, and as a result, when drought occurred, thousands of animals died of thirst and starvation. In the twentieth century, pastoralists realized the land could not sustain untold numbers of sheep and drastically reduced stock. Pernatty Station, in the 1890s, ran 25,000 sheep, in 2008, they ran 8,000.

The explorers' G W Goyder, John McDouall Stuart, Benjamin Herschall Babbage, and William Coulthard, gave conflicting reports on the land in the North-West. Many pastoralists bought leases in the area, however, after the drought of 1865, between 235,000 to 270,000 sheep perished. Goyder was requested to return to the North-west by the Surveyor-General of South Australia, and re-evaluate the line of demarcation between productive and marginal land.⁷ His re-evaluation upheld the findings of explorers Babbage and Stuart in previous years that much of the land was unsuitable for intense husbandry practices. Both Babbage, from March 1858, and Stuart, in June 1858, found the country and waterholes dry. Very little water remained in the creeks: the 'Pernatta' (Stuart's name for one of the creeks, which became Pernatty) contained salt water, and the 'Yolticourie' (later Yeltacowie) did not have enough water for the horses to quench their thirst. The Elizabeth Creek had water where Babbage made camp while Stuart made camp at Bottle Hill having found water and plenty of grass. However, overall both men were disappointed in the country, 'stony [with] sand and saltbush'.⁸

Stuart and Babbage never managed to meet although they were less than seventeen miles apart from each other. Babbage found, and buried on a ridge overlooking Pernatty Creek, the remains of the explorer William Coulthard, who, with two other men, William Scott and Henry Brooks, surveyed the country for

⁷ John Andrews, 'Goyder's line: a vanished frontier' *Australian Geographer*, 3:5, (1938), p32.

⁸ Babbage, B.H., 'Northern exploration' *South Australian Parliamentary Paper* No.151, 1858 p.5.

J McDouall Stuart 'Explorations by Mr. Stuart' *South Australian Parliamentary Paper* No.119, 185p.1.

useful sheep runs. However, after being warned of the hazards of the journey in the heat and the problems of little water beyond Port Augusta, Coulthard continued on, taking only six quarts of water for three men and four horses. Scott and Brooks met up with the Babbage party, but Coulthard succumbed to thirst when he found no water in Pernatty Creek. He shot his horse and drank its blood. Coulthard was only a few kilometres from fresh water, and it is unknown why he did not give the horse its head, as someone familiar with exploration would have done, for the horse would have smelled the water and found the source.⁹ Babbage and Stuart were witnesses to the beginnings of the 1858-1859 drought when waters dried up, and stock died.¹⁰ The only people who knew or understood the country and its droughts or rains, were the Aboriginal people, but few pastoralists were prepared to accept the advice they had to give.¹¹

South Australia is the driest state in the driest inhabited continent and only 3.3% of the area has an annual rainfall above 500mm or (20 inches), while the rest receives under 250mm (under 10 inches).¹² Water was carted to Adelaide's residents in water-carts from the River Torrens for twenty-four years, but proved inadequate in the summer months. Consequently, water from Thorndon Park reservoir in 1860 was piped to some of the streets, and it was cheaper than carted water. Hope Valley reservoir was built in 1872. Both these two reservoirs were filled from the River Torrens. The Onkaparinga River was the source of the Happy Valley reservoir, built in 1892-96. Port Augusta did not have a ready supply of water, and its inhabitants needed to cart water in until the 1890s when pipes were connected over a thirty-year period. This coincided with the opening of the Beetaloo (1890), Bundaleer (1902) and Baroota (1920) reservoirs. The reservoirs also serviced the Yorke Peninsula. The towns in other rural areas had to put up

⁹ Richardson, *The Pioneers of the North-West* p.26

¹⁰ Peter Donovan, *In the Interest of the Country – A History of the Pastoral Board of South Australia 1893-1993* (Adelaide, 1995), p.30.

¹¹ K Colls, & R Whitaker, *The Australian Weather Book* (Melbourne, 1990), p.47.

¹² *Atlas of South Australia*, Environment Department, S.A. Government (1986), p.30.

with 'semi-permanent streams, soaks or springs, and wells and small earthen dams'.¹³ The South Para River fed the Barossa reservoir built in 1902 and supplied Gawler, while on the Eyre Peninsular, the Tod River reservoir was completed in 1922 and serviced Ceduna and Port Lincoln.¹⁴ The problem with reservoirs and dams, rivers and creeks is evaporation. In South Australia and Australia, evaporation is greater than rainfall, especially in the areas of high temperatures, such as the arid areas and wheat lands.¹⁵ Evaporation is equal to rainfall in the heavily vegetated and humid areas such as the west coast of Tasmania, the Queensland coast near Innisfail and the east coast of Victoria.¹⁶ However, the evaporation rate for the arid and desert areas of Australia is between 2400mm and 3200mm, while Perth has between 2400mm and 2800mm of evaporation every year. The above areas receive on average between 0mm and 300mm rainfall annually. These figures question the socio-economic sustainability of much of Central Australia.

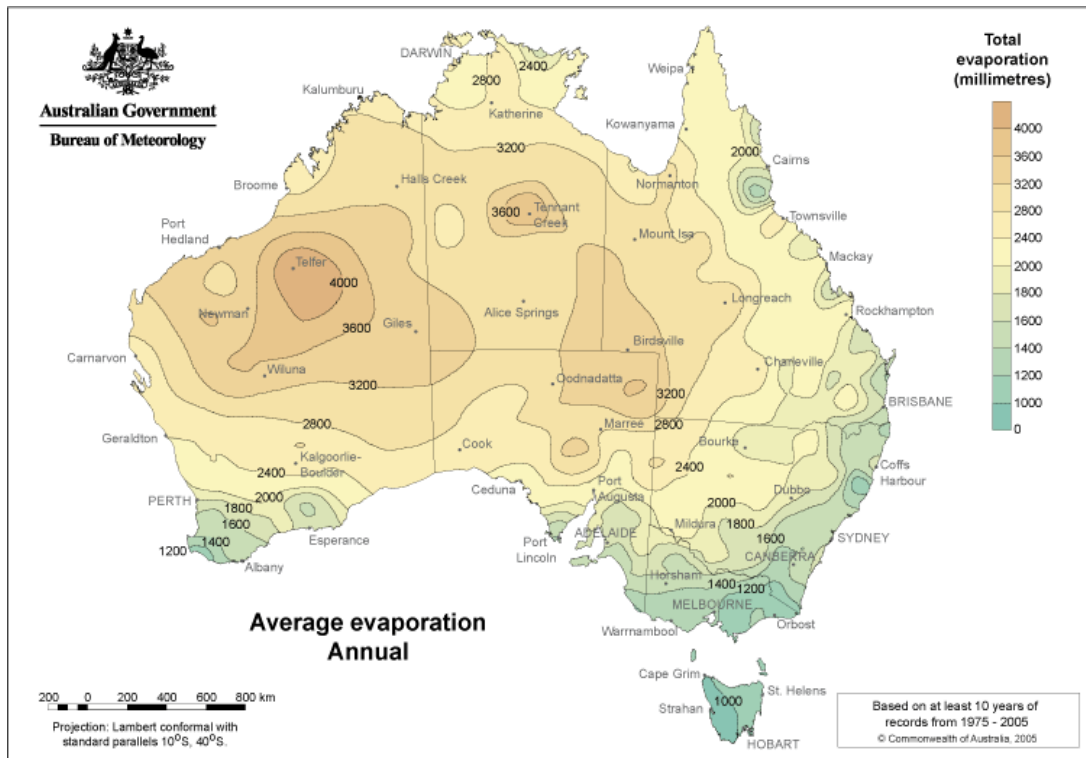
The droughts that occurred before 1860 largely went unnoticed because most of the settlers had made their homes in the rain belt, such as Adelaide, the South-East and the mid-north. It was the drought of 1864-65 that enabled Goyder to draw his 'line of rainfall', which caused consternation among the pastoralists and especially the farmers, who believed the rain followed the plough. However, this view, that a large area of crops, or a large body of water would produce evaporation, and in turn rainfall, was proved to be a fallacy. However, 'severe agricultural drought occurred again in 1884-86, 1895-98, 1901-03, 1911-15, 1927-29, 1943-46, 1959, 1967, 1976-77 and 1982', showing how vulnerable South

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *The Australian Weather Book*, p.43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.44.



Average annual evaporation rate

Source: Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

Australia was to drought and dry conditions, more so than the eastern states. There are no regular patterns to these droughts, yet the agricultural areas of South Australia, both farming and pastoral, had to improve their water-saving techniques to get through the dry seasons. There were stations that became unviable and were bought by others, but water harvesting needed to be a continual goal for agricultural and urban areas to maintain as droughts are a constant in this state.¹⁷ During the 1950s, South Australia experienced a cooling effect in the weather which caused good rainfall throughout the decade even with the 1959 drought, and then temperatures rose again.

¹⁷ Trevor Griffin & Murray McCaskill, (eds.) *Atlas of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1986), p.35.

Pernatty Station

In order to investigate socio-economic sustainability, three themes need to be examined: water storage, where it will come from, and how will it be moved to where it is needed and the need to conserve water in a drought; the effect of drought on the environment, including salinity and salty wells; and the financial costs associated with drought, including stock losses and loss of income. To examine these themes, I have utilized the Pernatty Pastoral Property Diaries, and the above topics will be analyzed and demonstrated in the way Walter French ran Pernatty, in bad as well as good times. I will, however, give a short overview of each of the themes below.

As we will see below, wells had to be dug by hand, a time consuming, back breaking endeavour. There were at least 100 wells dug on Pernatty, but few produced fresh water, most were salty because in another geological era, there was a sea where inland South Australia is now. Dams, while using some machinery, were labour intensive to build in earlier years. Initially, a suitable place for a dam had to be found, then horses and mules were utilized to plough out any rocks, after that scoops, attached to the animals, excavated the loose dirt. Eventually, tractors were used in place of animals. It was a long, expensive undertaking to build one dam and there are thirty-eight dams on Pernatty Station, the last one being built in 1983. In addition to water storage, work had to be done to move the water. Drains were built between dams and creeks to move water. These drains often silted up and had to be cleaned out. Pipelines were laid from wells and dams to tanks for stock use and to the homestead for domestic use. Windmills were built to pump water from wells to stock troughs and to the homestead. When dams dried up, water had to be carted from wells to the homestead and for stock use. During a drought, not all the wells dried up.

Land degradation could be severe in a drought. On Pernatty, salt-bush, blue-bush, and samphire were the most common stock feed. These plants were not heavy users of water, but did need some to thrive. To prevent overgrazing of these plants, sheep had to be moved from paddock to paddock. (Paddocks on Pernatty are approximately 20 square kilometres) Before the advent of motorcycles, horses were used to muster sheep from one paddock to another, generally taking several days to carry out. If drought continued for more than one season, it often became necessary to purchase and distribute fodder. This fodder was bought from Dalgety's store at Port Augusta, and cartage had to be paid to get the fodder to Bookaloo, the turn-off on the main road from Port Augusta, whereupon it was picked up by workers from the station. Branches would also be cut off trees for the sheep to eat. If the salt-bush or blue-bush was overgrazed it could take several years to recover.

Water storage and conservation, as well as preventing land degradation, was expensive. Sheep stations depended on the wool clip for their income and, as we have seen above, during drought wool weighed less which in turn meant less income from wool sales. In addition, in an ongoing drought, stock losses were inevitable, also affecting income. In the examination of the Pernatty Station diaries, we will discover how water finding and conservation was dealt with, and we will see the emotional as well as the financial loss drought brought, and we will discover, in detail, what the owners of Pernatty felt in those difficult times, as well as their joy when good rains fell.

Pernatty suffered from many droughts long before its establishment in 1868, while the first recorded drought was in 1869 when the two wells that had been dug by Bosworth went dry.¹⁸ Late in the 1880s, Mr William Coombe of Partacoona Station took over the lease. In March 1896, which was a drought

¹⁸ Richardson, *Pioneers of the North-West*, p.29.

year, Walter David French, as an employee of Mr. Coombe, took 28,500 sheep to Pernatty. The drought continued until May 1897 when mustering, Walter could only find 703 sheep out of over 24,000. The sheep were taken back to Partacoona and left there. In October of the same year Walter again went back to Pernatty to find the balance of the cattle and horses and water them. All that had survived the drought were '20 horses and 5 head of cattle out of several hundred head of horses and also several hundred head of cattle'. Tragically, a thunderstorm of 5 inches (125mm) fell in February 1898 to replenish the waterholes, creeks and wells. However, after installing a manager, Mr. Healy, at Pernatty and pasturing 4000 sheep, another drought in 1901-02 set in, and Mr. Coombe got Walter to take 3,000 sheep further west on agistment while the rest of the flock was sold. The sheep went back to Partacoona Station later on in the year.¹⁹ Two more well shafts were dug on Pernatty in the Willows paddock for more water but in 1906 Mr. Coombe decided to sell Pernatty to William Greenfield of South Gap Station, even though the rains after 1902 made the property well watered with plenty of feed.

Attempting to find water on any outback property was time consuming as most of the shafts had to be dug by hand. Then, there was no guarantee that fresh water would be struck. As A.J. Greenfield stated in his book, *Two Good Men*, 'all underground water contains some degree of salt... Sometimes a shaft would cut a stream of water which was nearly drinkable. Left to settle, as salt water is heavier than fresh, marginal water might be taken off the top. ... Cattle can tolerate saltier water than sheep, perhaps 700 grains of salt per gallon as against 500. ... Occasionally a previously good supply would turn salt and losses [occurred], so a regular check had to be kept on the quality. Apart from deaths, a sheep's wool will 'break' and tend to fall out if the animal is overdosed with

¹⁹ Letter by Walter David French, June 1960, held by author.

salt...this makes a sheep harder to shear, and the wool...draped amongst the scrub and gibbers'.²⁰

William Greenfield had two wells put down, one in Pernatty's Acacia paddock and the other in the Tiffen paddock, also on Pernatty. There was drought again in 1911-1915, and the sheep had to be shifted to the wells that still had water in them. Agnes French (nee Greenfield) wrote that during the drought the men were:

*Out with stock... [from] early morning, and it would be very late at night before they returned – they would be trying to get sheep a long distance to water even coaxing the sheep along by going ahead dripping water from wet bags for the sheep to scent.*²¹

When Walter and Agnes French took control of Pernatty as owners in their own right in October 1927, the property had been in drought since 1922, but it had just broken. The plant life had grown back with the rain and the stock had feed for a while. The new homestead was built at the Acacia Well but to ensure that the stock that they now owned (approximately 8000 sheep) had water, new wells and dams had to be made over most of the property. The people who lived on the station also needed water and were catered for by a small dam which was fed by the well. For the men, from October to December, was a busy time. Not only were they needed in helping to build the new homestead and surrounding buildings, but they had to clean silt out of the Acacia well that had built up with the dust storms created by the drought. The dam at Acacia Well was not full because the drain that ran into it was clogged, so Walter had to bring water back from Pernatty Well, which was four kilometres away. He assigned several men to clean the drain out. Clearing the silt out of the Acacia well took two weeks, and once the engine was

²⁰ Greenfield, *Two Good Men*, pp.36-37.

²¹ Letter to CWA Newsletter 1957

repaired, the water could be pumped up into the dam.²² Once summer began and the rains ceased Pernatty again became drier. By the end of the year Walter wrote in the diary,

A very windy and dusty, disagreeable day to end up the old year. One of the worst days this writer has seen for some time, the country in a very dry state. Generally most of the sheep on the wells. A very scanty rainfall for the year.²³

On the 1st January 1928 Pernatty Station received a government rain gauge which was to be kept from the first rain day with the returns sent to the Weather Bureau in Adelaide.²⁴ The gauge is still kept to this day with the information sent to the Woomera Office of the Bureau of Meteorology.

Pipe-laying began from the Acacia Well at the homestead to Pernatty Well, a distance of four kilometres, to ensure a water flow between the two places. If one well went dry then, all being successful, water could be pumped from the other. However, by March 1928, the sheep were dying at Pernatty Well. January, February and March 1928 had no rain, and by the 16th April, 60 days had passed since rain fell. A light drizzle fell after 88 days with 2.5mm, but it was insufficient to help with the lack of water.²⁵ The sheep needed to be cared for, given feed and water, therefore, stockmen were sent to different parts of Pernatty to pump the water and ensure the sheep were safe. Not only was the water to be pumped but any breakages in the engines or windmills were fixed by the men, and the sheep, in their weakened state were checked for flystrike. If the feed ran out the sheep would be moved to another area to graze. However, the horses, mules and cattle were suffering too, and Walter went to North Tiffen paddock to

²² Pernatty Diaries, 11 to 22 October 1927.

²³ *Ibid.* 31 December 1927.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 1 January 1928.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 14 May 1928.

water some of the saddle horses to try and save them, but in the end his son Laurie, had to shoot four horses and two mules. One of the Domyer brothers, Mal, went to North Tiffen to look after the rest of the saddle horses.²⁶ The water at North Tiffen Well became salty and on the 13th June, Walter drafted out eleven horses and destroyed them, they were too ill to save.²⁷ The cattle were moved to another area where water could be reached. Chaff was bought to feed the stock and was delivered at the same time as the mail was left near the main road. More was needed each week and the amount of chaff increased every Thursday when it was brought in the mail run. This gives some idea of the difficulty of feeding stock during a drought, and the sad task of destroying animals dying of hunger and thirst.

Throughout the months of June and July, 22.5mm of rain fell. This freshened up the feed and produced running water into a number of dams, including the one at the homestead. Nellie's Tank was full (7 kms from homestead), South Eliza dam had three feet of water, and the Pernatty Waterhole was filled to capacity, while the Avenue gained a 'good drop and Toby Catch was half full. Splendid little rain', wrote Walter in the diary, displaying the joy reasonable rain brought.²⁸ More pipe-laying, this time from the Willows wells to the homestead, boosted the intake of water for both stock and the residents, who by this time experienced running water into the house. It saved Agnes and the domestic staff from getting the water by buckets for filling the kettles in the kitchen and washing in the laundry. The first water from the Willows came through at 5.10 pm on the 23rd August 1928.²⁹ A windmill was erected at the Willows next day to add to the pumping capacity along with the engine. The quest for water throughout 1928 saw four wells dug out, two at North Eliza with one close to

²⁶ *Ibid.* 22 May 1928

²⁷ *Ibid.* 13 June 1928

²⁸ *Ibid.* 2 August 1928.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 23 August 1928.

Peters Hole to a depth of 52 feet, and another at the Tadpole Hole down to 72 feet. Both wells produced bitter water unsuitable for stock. The well dug at Pernatty Well on the bank of the creek went to 40 feet, again producing bitter water. However, a well dug at the station close to the tank produced good water of about 1200 to 1300 gallons at a depth of 49 feet 6 inches. West Point Dam was cleaned out to an area of 2236 yards to a depth of 12 feet, while the drains (similar to small creeks) at Toby Swamp were cleaned out for four miles. Troughs were renewed where needed, as were the windmills.³⁰ In November Walter, displaying some desperation, called in a water diviner, Mr. Fearn, as the drought continued on. It was believed that some people had the ability to find water using either two sticks or a forked stick. Occasionally, it worked. Mr. Fearn picked out nine sites for wells with varying depths from 80 to 300 feet. By this time too, the men had to draw the water from the wells for the stock to drink. The weather had become very hot since October; it was over 35 degrees most days with northerly winds which dried out the country very quickly. Walter lamented at the end of the 1928:

The finish up of a very dry year. The driest season for a long time, 282 points (73mms) of rain fell in small quantities with very little green at all. A nice shower in August which filled the dam at the house, which was a big help only locally. Still pumping at Pernatty Well, Willows, Old Pernatty and the Woodforde.³¹

The worst was yet to come in the next year as the drought continued.

Apart from a thunderstorm in January which brought rain to the Woodforde with 82 points (20.5 mm) which made the creek run, and 52 points (13 mm) at the homestead, causing the dam to overflow, the rest of 1929 was dry. The engine at

³⁰ *Memorandum*, 1928

³¹ *Diaries*, 31 December 1928.

the Willows well stripped a cog so water could not be pumped until Bill French brought in a pump from Pernatty Well to take its place. A trial hole was being sunk in the Catch Hole at the Good Friday Dam³², and another trial hole had been sunk near the homestead, but the men struck a hard patch of clay and had to use gelignite to blast it out. Water was being drawn from several places, Woodforde, Willows, Pernatty Well, and the homestead, for the stock to drink. The trial hole near the homestead struck fresh water at 27 feet 6 inches, as did the hole being dug at Good Friday dam. Both wells had to be shored up for use. This meant the men had to install wood panels up the walls to give both wells strength. (See figure 3) The daily temperature for this time was over 35 degrees for days on end, along with hot, northerly winds. Throughout the year, various well sites were sunk only to give salt water, causing greater disappointment. Engines and windmills failed to pump water into tanks, usually because the sand had damaged the motors or gears, and either had to be repaired or replaced.³³ Here, we see the hard work finding, and making sure water got to where it was needed. It was almost a never-ending occupation searching for water and cleaning out the wells and dams which existed.

The situation during the year was grim for the sheep and cattle. The feed was gone, the little water left was drying up in the dams, chaff was brought in still, and branches from trees were cut down to give the animals some sustenance. Both the sheep and cattle were getting bogged trying to reach the small amount of water in the dams and in their struggles to get out, became exhausted and died. The cattle were eventually agisted to Yudnapinna Station until the situation improved on Pernatty. Out of 7,765 sheep from the 1928 shearing, Pernatty lost 5,000 sheep and lambs in 1929. However, rain fell in December giving 181 points (46 mm) into the creeks and dams, filling most of them. Most of the people

³² Called Good Friday Dam because the digging began on Good Friday, 1924.

³³ *Diaries*, January 1929.

on Pernatty went to look at the water along the Willows Creek and had a picnic. It was time to celebrate after very difficult years of drought.



Wood panelled well (shored up) at the Willows. Source: Laurie McArthur - URL<www.southimage.net/wilderness-travel/.

Pastoral properties can go through a year or several in drought but rain will eventually come, as has been shown for 1929. Walter recorded that 1930, was an excellent year with 249.7 mm of rain; 1931 had 186.7 mm of rain; and 1932



Acacia Creek and dam in flood from the breakup of drought 1929. Source: Colin French – Pernatty Station.

saw 164. 5mm of rain fall,³⁴ until 1933 when Pernatty went through the year with very little rain until August, when good rain fell. Walter wrote at the end of December,

A very dry year right up until August when good, useful showers fell. 136 points (34mm) being registered for the month, and again 79 points (19.5 mm) of heavy rain with thunder, fell in November, making the latter part of the year one of the best for some time. Rain only light and patchy anywhere north of the station. The Commonwealth Waterhole got full

³⁴ *Diaries*, 31 December 1932.

again having been banked for nearly a year without water running in. Toby Square Dam full with good feed showing in most of the sand.³⁵

Walter knew that work had to be done to prepare for the rain which would eventually come and enable Pernatty to store it. During 1933 the men and contractors had been busy with dam-sinking, ready for the water that flowed from rains. The waterholes were banked up to allow a greater capacity for holding water. This was done at the Commonwealth Waterhole, and The Avenue Creek was also banked giving it further capacity. The idea works the same way as a weir but instead of cutting across a creek or waterhole the bank runs parallel with the bed. The dams had the silt removed from them after years of use, and dust storms. This allowed for an increase in capacity of water. The dam-sinkers, Eric Martin and party, arrived at Toby Swamp in February 1934 to repair the bank at Hard Struggle dam. After the good rains at the end of 1933 January and February 1934 were hot with temperatures over 38 degrees, sometimes reaching over 45 degrees in the shade. Mr. Martin began to build a dam from scratch two kilometres from the homestead on February 17th 1934. The dam was to be 70 yards by 60 yards at the top measurement. The first new dam pegged out for some considerable time.³⁶ It was known as Martin's Dam, and it took two years to build. This is the largest dam on Pernatty and was first filled by floods three years and eight months from the day it was started.³⁷ The end of the diary for the year told of Walter's frustrations.

A very disappointing year. The first three months there was plenty of feed on the south part of the station, very light rains having fallen over the part north of the homestead. Very little herbage grew. Consequently, there was

³⁵ *Diaries*, 31 December 1933.

³⁶ *Diaries*, 17 February 1934.

³⁷ *Diaries*, 1 December 1937.

no surface water for lambing, and the percentage was poor – no lambs being tailed until after shearing.

During the winter up till July, the weather was very calm. No wind for the [wind] mills and freelite, but from July onwards the heavy winds have been awful, tearing the sandy country to pieces.

Nice rains fell in November, 84 points (21 mm) but the next day was a very bad dust storm and for several days following, drying up the country and ruining the prospects of any decent growth of feed. The latter part of the year was one of the worst for heavy winds and dust storms the writer has known, from 38 years experience. In November, the grasshopper plague came along and swept the Crabhole feed on the Tableland, making 1934 a very disagreeable and disappointing year.

No lambing to speak of and dust storms and gales all through shearing making the wool a very dirty state, and going a long way towards filling up the waterholes along the Pernatty Creek. Rainfall again, very light on the north end of the run, being for four years [in a row]. In hope of something better for 1935.³⁸

The year 1934 was the eleventh successive year of sub-average rainfall in the North, and the pastoral conditions were poor.³⁹ Walter's hope for a better 1935 did not eventuate, and his words best describe the year.

January –came in with thunderstorms, chiefly North and South Eliza, and Good Friday dams full. A good flood went past Pernatty but heavy winds prevailed throughout the month causing dust storms and drift to blow badly. Sandy country looking butchered mostly.

³⁸ *Diaries*, 31 December 1934.

³⁹ *Jubilee Year – 1940- A Record of Fifty Years of Progress 1890-1940*, The Stockowners' Association of South Australia (Adelaide, 1940), pp. 24-25.

February - a very dry month with heavy winds at times, dust storms. Not a point of rain to record. Country very windswept and dry.

March - a very dry month with heavy winds. 46 points (11.5 mm) rain altogether. The last of the water pumped out of the dam into the tank at the homestead. The dam then cleaned out with the donkeys.

He noted that April, May, June and July were very dry with heavy winds in April and dust storms in July.⁴⁰ However, he noted that:

August-mostly dry, with heavy winds at times. Shearing during month in new Pernatty Woolshed. 58 points (14 mm) in 7 falls.⁴¹

Walter wrote that 'a nice shower' occurred in September, and October had 'very light rains' but the adjoining properties, 'had five thunderstorms filling most of the dams'. November was very with 'no rain worth mentioning'.⁴²

December-one of the worst gales recorded on Pernatty blowing down, and wrecking, the Willows mill, and the Billabong mill at the homestead, broke the engine at the Willows, and blew the petrol house down at the homestead. It also lifted the roof off the Woolshed. Comes to an end - a very dry and disagreeable year.⁴³

It is apparent that even when it does rain, a strong wind can destroy any benefit it gives. It is also possible for water from a good rain to build up strength and rush through a property leaving hardly any moisture in the topsoil, but gather up sand, soil and stones and dump them elsewhere, and/or destroy buildings and trees as was witnessed in the January 2007 storms in the Pernatty and Northern Flinders

⁴⁰ *Diaries*, 31 December 1934.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Memorandum*, 1935.

areas. Rain, besides being beneficial was, and still is, a destroyer of land and infrastructure.

In January 1936, the men were busy repairing the damage done in the previous December. In order to mend the Willows and Billabong windmills, fan heads needed straightening, the rods for pumping were taken to the blacksmith hut and re-molded and hammered, and a new frame for the legs made. It took two weeks to get the windmills together and re-erected. The Willows well had to be cleaned out due to the storm damage, and the engine fixed. The well was 94 feet deep, and the drive (rod) from the windmill was 51 feet long. While this took a number of months to do, Tom French and Harold Kleeman, and later Jack French, had taken on contract work to dig more wells on Pernatty. They would do this work for a number of years. Many wells were drilled, and two out of five wells had drinkable water.⁴⁴ In spite of the fact that another drought year, with only 87.6 mm of rain, happened, Pernatty gained extra land and watering areas with the purchase of neighbouring Yeltacowie Station in June. Walter, Walty and Bill French and Fred Welk surveyed Yeltacowie in July to evaluate the water situation.

They went to YMG (Young Mount Gunson) Dam and on to the 'little well north of Mount Gunson where there is a chance of a good water being found, also at YMG Dam. Was not very favourably impressed with Finlayson's Dam in the sandhills. Some fine pastoral country on the south end. Inspected the overshot dam where there is a great possibility of making that much higher'.⁴⁵

The land became drier in the latter part of the year, and the sheep were moved as the feed disappeared and water became scarcer. Problems with pumping engines continued with sand getting into them and windmills were damaged in the high winds. In the end, the year proved just as dry as previous ones and without

⁴⁴ *Diaries*, Jan-Mar 1936.

⁴⁵ *Diaries*, 19 July 1936.

winter herbage due to the lack of rains made it four years in a row without green feed 'unheard of in the history of the writer, [and] the year ends with prospects very dark',⁴⁶ wrote Walter.

Pernatty Station suffered through the World War II drought from late 1939 to 1945. Before this, dams had been built at Red Lake, the Avenue and Bottle Hill, while Camel Dam had been scooped out and enlarged. They were filled through the winter rains of 1939. However, it remained dry from July, yet 14,845 sheep were shorn that year.⁴⁷ Hot winds and temperatures of over 40 degrees hit Pernatty in January and February 1940, and by March, water became low in some of the dams, due to no rain for eight months. A well at the Willows had caved in, and it took the men many weeks to clean it out and panel it again. There was always a fear of a well caving in while someone was in it. Silt in Bonny's Bluff dam was cleaned in readiness for any rain, but the dust storms kept blowing leaving banks of sand everywhere, throughout the houses, men's quarters, garages, troughs and wells, even around the trees. Only 8,314 sheep were shorn. Walter wrote at the end of the year,

Thus ends another year, a real drought of only 216 points (54.6 mm) for the year. Most of the stock low in condition and weak. The driest season since 1902 when only 168 points (42 mm) fell. Exit 1940, a year of drought, war and carnage. Most of the stock low in condition and weak.⁴⁸

Pernatty fared better in 1941, when 197.5 mm of rain fell early, replenishing the dams. Bonny's Bluff, Bottle Hill, Sherry's, Yeltacowie and Camel dams full, along with Good Friday and Thompson's Dam at the Woodforde. The Avenue and White Dam had a good drop of rain, and Hard Struggle Dam near Toby Swamp also had

⁴⁶ *Diaries*, 31 December 1936.

⁴⁷ *Diaries*, 31 December 1939.

⁴⁸ *Diaries*, 31 December 1940.

water running into it.⁴⁹ However, by the end of July, the weather was bringing in the hot, blustery winds, and feed was not abundant. But as Walter said at the end of 1941, 'Splendid rains [at] the beginning of the year but dried up later. No winter feed of any consequence, but a good year for fattening stock [9,497 sheep]. No rabbits of any consequence.'⁵⁰

By early January 1942, the waterholes at North Eliza were all dry, with water low at South Eliza. The Avenue was dry, and the sheep had moved to Pernatty Well.

In the meantime, Walter was trying desperately to make provision for water catchment and conservation. A Mr. Baldock was employed to make a catch hole on Pernatty Creek to be six feet deep, and one at Toby Swamp. These facilitate the gathering of run-off water after rains. Mr. Baldock had also cleaned out and enlarged Hard Struggle Dam to 80 feet long by 60 feet wide and 18.6 feet deep. He removed 21,277 yards of dirt altogether. In March, Martin's Dam went dry due to the windmill not being shut off by two young stockmen, allowing the water from the tank to overflow. Water was being pumped from the Willows but often air blocked the pipeline, and until it was cleared no water went through.⁵¹ As the windmills were becalmed through no wind, the engines needed to be in good working order to pump water. The calm weather was opportune, as a six-foot Southern Cross windmill was erected over a salt well on Pernatty Creek as an experiment to drain the salt water, while hoping drinkable water for stock was left.⁵² It is unknown whether it was successful, as nothing was mentioned as to its fate.

The year 1942, in general, passed well even though 415 points (105.7 mm) of rain fell in winter, refreshing the water situation for a short while and enabled winter

⁴⁹ *Diaries*, January-February 1941.

⁵⁰ *Diaries*, 31 December 1941.

⁵¹ *Diaries*, January-March 1942.

⁵² *Diaries*, October 1942.

feed to grow in the sand hills. But, 1943 began like 1942, with the dams drying up with 1,087 sheep moved from Sells Dam to the Station Dam at Yeltacowie. However, rains in February of 138 points (34 mm) topped some of them up. No water ran into the dam at South Eliza, but the country looked fresh. 68 points (17 mm) at the Woodforde put three feet six inches of water into the Catch Hole there. There was rain again in August with 25 points (6.5 mm) at the Avenue putting a foot of water in the Catch Hole there, and 27 points at Pernatty homestead, which filled Martin's and the House Dams to near capacity. Otherwise the year was dry and kangaroos and rabbits were becoming a problem. Walter wrote at the end of the year,

Thus ends another dry year. Only one decent rain in February over the south end of Rim. Scarcely any rain north of the station or east. 414 points (105.3 mm) registered, 50 points of that just about over the rain gauge.⁵³

Dry weather had set in again in January 1944 with water drying up at YMG and the Manganese dams. The sheep were moved to the Yeltacowie dam. A new 10,000-gallon tank was erected at Pernatty Well, which took the men several days to assemble after cementing in the foundations. It was built just in time as the temperature went up to 42 degrees, and a black dust storm came in from the north-east and covered the station. Next day, 77 points (14.5 mm) of rain fell filling Martin's Dam and the Garden Dam at the homestead. In fact, quite a few dams received good run-off from the rain as Yeltacowie received 62 points (15 mm).⁵⁴ However, by August, the dry weather set in again with dust storms and winds. Rabbits, and kangaroos in the hundreds, became a problem eating the feed badly needed by the sheep and cattle. Troughs became full of sand and were shoveled out to allow the water in, while rods in windmills were damaged and had to be mended in order to continue pumping water. These problems continued

⁵³ *Diaries*, 31 December 1943.

⁵⁴ *Diaries*, January-February 1944.

throughout the rest of the year while temperatures rose to 100°F from the end of August. By early December Walter and his son Walty went to Toby Swamp and then onto Hard Struggle. What they found Walter described as heartbreaking:

The country in a horrible mess, windswept and bare. A heart breaking scene to see Hard Struggle with the bogged and dead cattle and sheep. Also Toby but things in a better position at Toby, having an appliance to pump the water out. 'Black Saturday' all dust and windy.⁵⁵



Many sheep died in the droughts, due to insufficient food and water. Source: Laurie McArthur - URL<www.southimage.net/wilderness-travel/

Although rain fell on 21 December with 83 points (20.75 mm) at Pernatty homestead, 44 points (11 mm) at Yeltacowie and the Woodforde, causing the water to run into various dams, the weather changed quickly back to the wind, dust and heat. Walter wrote:

⁵⁵ *Diaries,*

This ends another dry and droughty year with 380 points (96.6 mm). No green feed to speak of, a year of sand and dust. The country in a bad state in the Sandhill country. Altogether the end of 1944 not very bright in some respects but, 136 points (34 mm) of rain turned disaster into hope.⁵⁶

Which it did, as 1945 became a precursor to two good years of rain.

Walter was still thinking about water catchment and conservation. A new well at the Willows was being timbered in January 1945, to a depth of 50 feet. The rain from December had given the feed good growth, but from the 24th of January, the temperature was up to 114°F or more daily, and pumping commenced from the Willows to the Acacia (homestead) dam. Walter decided that behind, and joining to, Martin's Dam, another dam of 80 yards by 70 yards would be built by a Mr. Todd and party.⁵⁷ Two earthenware pipes were put through the bank of Martin's Dam into Todd's Dam allowing for water to flow from either end. Todd's Dam would not have a complete bank at its southern end allowing for the excess water to flow into the Acacia Creek. Martin's and Todd's Dams conjoined are the biggest dams on the property and water stays for two years.⁵⁸ As Sells Dam had little water in it, Walter had the bank ripped off and the dam cleaned out and deepened, and then had Greenfield's Bluff Dam cleaned and made larger with the top 180 feet by 130 feet, bottom 82 feet by 28 feet, with a depth of 20 feet. From there Todd's party went to South Eliza and built a new dam. Mr. Todd then moved to the Woodforde to Good Friday Dam and built a site in front of it as a catchment area, 80 feet by 60 feet. He finished work on 15 December 1945. Walter was optimistic about the future when he wrote:

Thus ends another year, much better for both feed and water than the previous years. Five good sized dams sunk and cleaned out during the year at Pernatty –

⁵⁶ *Diaries*, 31 December 1944.

⁵⁷ *Diaries*, 5 March 1945.

⁵⁸ Letter by Walter David French, June 1959.

waiting for a sharp rain. Prospects for the coming year look much brighter than usual.⁵⁹

The dry weather returned in 1948 after two 'splendid' years of rain. The amount of work done to catch and conserve water is shown above. Not only the time, but the cost of such work must have been a drain on the income from the wool, particularly after several years of poor rain. Good rains offered optimistic prospects, until the dry weather returned.

By March 1948, the country around Mount Gunson and Lake Windabout was very dry with little water in the dams. Kangaroos had been prolific around Toby Swamp as were the rabbits. Water was in short supply at the Willows after the windmill rod had shattered after a dust storm, with the sheep milling around the trough. Once the rod was fixed pumping commenced, sending the water to the troughs and into the Acacia tank.⁶⁰ The men were constantly checking the dams for the animals bogged in the mud and getting them out. Often, if an animal had thrashed about too much, their legs could be broken, and the animal would have had to be destroyed once pulled out. Martin's Dam dried out when the last of the water was pumped out of it on the 20th July.

In late 1947, the Woomera village was built to accommodate British and Australian personnel who were going to service the rocket range. By 1948, the infrastructure for the range was built and one of them was the Port Augusta – Woomera pipeline. The pastoral stations that bordered the pipeline route received a letter from the Commonwealth of Australia Department of the Interior, Property and Survey Branch Officer, J. A. Campbell. In Walter and Agnes' letter, he advised of the survey to be made through Section 233, Hundred of Copley and Pastoral Leases 1629 (Corraberra Station) and 1736 (the Mount Gunson end of

⁵⁹ *Diaries*, 31 December 1945.

⁶⁰ *Diaries*, March-May 1948.

Pernatty) for the laying of the pipeline. He requested that a 'permissive occupancy' be granted over the land mentioned for the building works to go on.

Mr. Campbell also stated that a:

Limited amount of water could be made available to you if you so desired and in this connection advice as to where the draw off point is desired is required. It is understood that the Surveyor has already discussed with you the question of the cross overs (access points) to be provided in your property and so far as is possible your wishes in this connection will be met.⁶¹

On the 21st June 1948, Tom French went to the Wirrappa railway siding and met the Surveyor responsible for the pipeline, Mr. Pauley, to see him about the cross overs and draw off points to serve the Gunson block.⁶² For lease 1629 'Corraberra', 1000 gallons of water were allotted per day for use, while the Mount Gunson/Yeltacowie lease was allotted 2000 gallons per day.⁶³ In 1951, Walter had built a pipeline and tank from the cross over point at Mount Gunson for use on Pernatty. The water was not used all the time but in dry months and through droughts, the pipeline water became useful for stock and the residents of Pernatty, and in times of severe drought it would be a lifeline.

Although 1948 finished with merely 290 points of rain (72.6 mm) Pernatty had exceptional rainfall from 1949 to 1956, as did the state. 1957 only had 310 points of rain (77.5 mm), and it was a busy year with the men fixing the pipes which ran between tanks, wells and dams. Many of the pipes which had been laid in the earlier years were replaced by better made ones. The drains that ran from some of the dams, Dawson's and Bottle Hills Dams, for instance, were cleaned out, as

⁶¹ Letter from Surveyor and Property Officer, J A Campbell to Walter & Agnes French, 9 June 1948.

⁶² *Diaries*, 21 June 1948.

⁶³ Letter from Walter French to J. A. Campbell, 7 May 1951.

were tanks that were low in water. Walter's son, Walty met Fred Norton's dam-sinking machinery at Toby Swamp in February and pegged out a site for a catch hole 99 feet by 99 feet for the top, and 53 feet by 53 feet for the bottom to be made. John McDonald had gone around the waters at Mount Gunson and found some sheep perished at the tank.⁶⁴ When Norton finished the Toby catch hole, he moved to the Shore Hill dam at the Woodforde and enlarged it, top 243 feet by 240 feet, bottom 101 feet by 94 feet, and depth of 25 feet 3 inches. When he finished Shore Hill dam, he moved onto Good Friday dam, also at the Woodforde. From there he moved to the South Eliza area to enlarge one of the old dams, then onto Dawson's dam at Yeltacowie to enlarge it. Norton finished the year at Hogan's Ghost, still in the Yeltacowie region to enlarge the dam, top 286 feet by 240 feet, bottom 174 feet by 173 feet, and depth 13 feet.⁶⁵ We see above, that seven years of good rain meant a lot of hard work preparing water catchments and storage facilities, and moving water to where it was needed for the time when drought would come again.

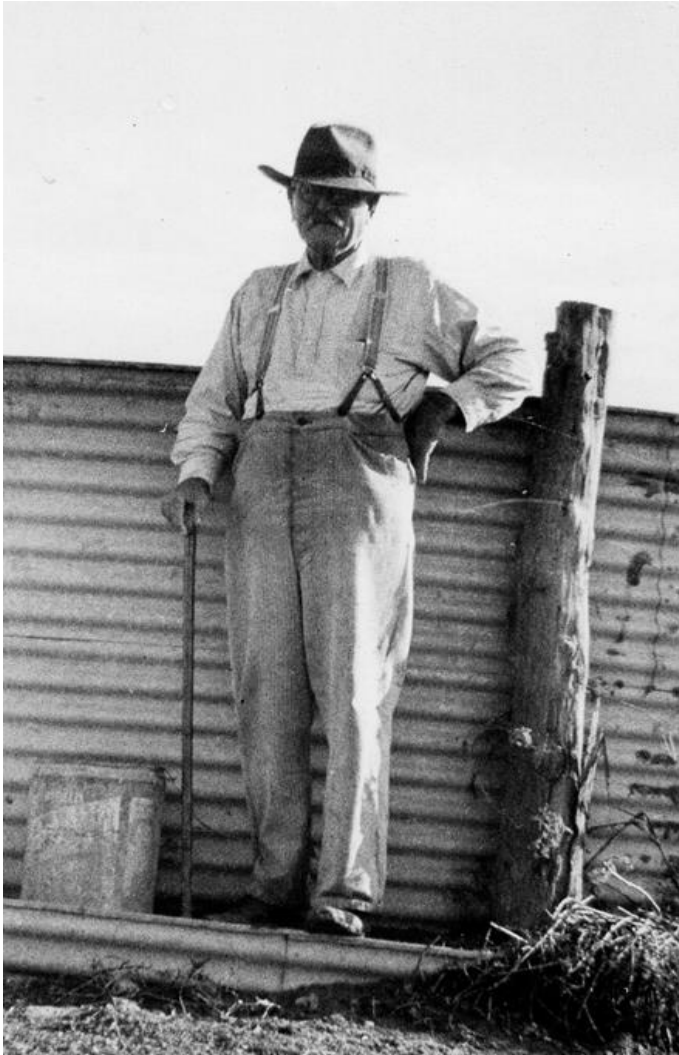
During the year, the tank at Pernatty Well made of stone and cement, was cleaned out with the inside and bottom cement scraped out and fresh put in. A tank, of galvanized iron sheets and 10,000 gallons, was put up on the hill overlooking the homestead, and Walty, his son Colin, Tom and Ray Parkinson, and Tim McCourt went over to Bottle Hill, in the Yeltacowie region, and built a concrete ring base for a 10,000-gallon tank there. The sheets were bolted together, and a windmill was erected next to it for pumping from the dam. A trough was also fixed to the tank for the stock. It took the men a week to install it all.⁶⁶ Throughout the year, the land became dry and the sheep were watered from the wells. Five bores were sunk at the end of that year, and three were

⁶⁴ *Diaries*, February 1957.

⁶⁵ *Diaries*, November 1957.

⁶⁶ *Diaries*, July 1957.

successful, one at the Willows when E. Brown struck good water at 78 feet and at 92 feet, and at North Tiffen near the boundary fence with South Gap, striking fresh at 52 feet.⁶⁷ The rain fell after a very dry year on 28th December.



Walter French year unknown

According to the station diaries, 1959 was a dry year with 364 points of rain (90.1 mm). In March, the Yeltacowie well collapsed and the windmill fell into it. It took a month to get the well and windmill back into working order. Rain fell with 112 points (28 mm) causing the country to become boggy. The Willows well was re-timbered due to structural damage inside, as was the well at YMG, which had

⁶⁷ *Diaries*, 1st November 1957.

collapsed. At Yeltacowie, the roof was blown off the men's hut and three stone rooms by a strong wind in November.⁶⁸ Many of the things that happened in 1957 happened in this year, too, as the men were busy moving the sheep to waters throughout the year as it warmed up, sinking bores, fixing windmills, tanks and engines due to structural damage and high winds. By this time Walter and Agnes had left the station due to ill health and had been living in Port Augusta since 1958. Although Walty was now manager, Walter and Agnes were in partnership with him, and Walter often came back to Pernatty with the men from the stock and station agency, Dalgety, until his death in 1960.

Pernatty Station was in drought from 1999 to 2010, and instead of the 13 or so workers who would have been employed on the station in years past, only three men worked Pernatty, Colin French until his death in 2009, grandson of Walter and Agnes, his son Leslie and a stockman. Much money, time and labour was, expended on Pernatty in an attempt to store and conserve water. Waterproofing Pernatty was, and is, vitally important because the rainfall in the area is low and unpredictable. Although Woomera pipeline was an added useful feature, it was not, and is not, used unless it is necessary. The land on which Pernatty stands is fragile; too much water would destroy the flora native to the area, and the soil, poor as it is, would be washed away. Managing the land is as important to Pernatty as is waterproofing, and this is where we touch upon the socio-economic dimensions of sustainability. Can a sheep station continue to be a profitable enterprise in marginal land without damaging the land itself? We know that pastoralists do not run as much stock as they had done in previous years, and are much more aware of the need to protect the land. Because of the closer links between pastoralists, environmental and primary industry agencies, more care is

⁶⁸ *Diaries*, March to November 1959.

taken of the land. The businesses themselves must be more efficient and cost-effective in order to sustain the property.

Monthly Rainfall for Pernatty Station 1927 - 1961

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1928	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	7.4	18.8	10.7	12.5	4.1	7.9	0.0	4.5	73.0
1929	0.0	0.0	3.5	1.0	0.0	16.0	0.0	2.8	7.8	0.0	8.4	46.0	85.5
1930	0.0	12.9	0.0	7.9	7.9	0.0	50.1	46.8	17.7	30.9	23.9	51.6	249.7
1931	1.3	0.0	58.9	21.3	11.2	51.0	20.6	10.4	7.4	4.6	0.0	0.0	186.7
1932	0.0	24.9	5.8	15.2	39.5	12.4	10.7	22.4	10.4	10.5	12.7	0.0	164.5
1933	0.0	0.0	13.2	1.3	16.0	4.6	17.9	34.6	11.5	0.8	20.1	9.9	129.9
1934	0.0	18.6	1.3	0.0	2.0	7.9	13.2	14.8	7.9	12.2	34.8	0.0	112.7
1935	17.2	0.0	12.5	5.1	0.5	3.1	1.0	14.7	18.8	7.4	11.3	2.5	94.1
1936	21.1	10.2	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.8	2.6	20.5	0.0	21.4	0.8	6.6	87.6
1937	87.1	25.8	1.0	0.0	6.4	15.2	2.6	29.0	5.1	14.7	27.7	31.5	246.0
1938	21.6	98.1	0.0	1.5	0.0	13.0	10.0	20.6	1.0	63.5	0.0	0.0	229.3
1939	15.0	33.5	7.4	10.9	33.4	22.8	14.2	9.9	0.0	0.0	21.9	0.0	169.0
1940	3.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	15.5	0.0	7.3	3.0	7.3	5.6	0.0	3.8	54.6
1941	78.7	3.0	45.7	3.6	0.0	23.6	17.8	4.0	0.0	15.7	5.4	0.0	197.5
1942	8.9	2.3	0.0	8.9	26.7	13.3	11.0	15.3	8.1	1.0	8.9	1.3	105.7
1943	0.0	40.7	1.8	15.0	0.0	5.3	13.4	21.2	0.0	2.8	3.3	1.8	105.3
1944	5.1	19.6	0.0	12.2	6.9	0.0	3.3	7.9	0.8	3.3	3.0	34.5	96.6
1945	15.0	8.9	6.6	0.0	8.2	57.9	18.3	8.1	12.2	11.7	5.1	22.8	174.8
1946	45.5	165.	12.7	18.5	0.0	9.4	6.1	2.8	14.8	1.0	38.0	40.7	354.9
1947	1.3	34.8	53.6	3.3	0.0	15.5	14.0	11.9	14.7	42.5	38.3	21.6	251.5
1948	3.3	2.5	0.0	2.5	0.0	6.6	3.6	12.2	0.0	12.2	1.3	28.4	72.6
1949	0.0	79.5	0.0	9.7	45.5	12.5	16.6	4.6	38.6	37.2	9.8	5.6	259.6
1950	1.0	88.7	55.8	0.0	54.6	20.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.5	66.5	15.7	317.5
1951	0.0	0.0	4.8	2.0	2.5	69.5	26.2	7.6	6.8	0.0	0.0	10.9	130.3
1952	20.1	0.0	6.1	19.3	41.8	5.6	16.2	9.6	20.8	24.7	11.1	1.5	176.8
1953	17.0	31.7	1.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	3.0	15.3	3.0	5.6	11.7	49.0	144.2
1954	35.6	0.0	0.0	69.1	0.0	9.7	7.4	11.7	0.0	20.6	22.6	13.0	189.7
1955	0.0	37.0	49.1	17.6	42.8	18.7	10.7	29.4	16.8	0.0	24.4	1.5	248.0
1956	0.0	27.9	38.6	39.1	23.9	29.8	58.9	2.5	14.6	21.8	0.8	0.0	257.9
1957	0.0	1.0	4.1	5.1	0.0	8.4	2.0	2.5	0.0	8.6	0.0	45.8	77.5
1958	2.8	1.3	76.2	10.9	24.9	0.0	22.3	54.4	18.0	8.9	17.6	5.1	242.4
1959	0.0	10.2	30.5	0.0	5.6	5.0	10.9	6.9	1.5	4.8	14.7	0.0	90.1
1960	6.6	4.8	0.0	1.5	20.8	20.6	10.2	10.6	45.2	0.0	12.0	3.8	136.1
1961	19.3	1.5	12.0	43.0	2.5	3.8	2.6	5.3	5.3	0.0	51.6	43.9	190.8

Source: Climate Service Centre, South Australian Office of the Bureau of Meteorology

Chapter Four

Sheep and Wool

Sheep and wool were important to South Australia's, and Australia's, economy from 1837 to the 1960s. Pastoral sheep stations such as Pernatty had to be large enterprises in the marginal lands to be economically viable. The properties employed many people, the men to look after the sheep, and the women to look after the domestic areas of the property. The income derived from the sheep was from the sale of the wool after shearing which happened once a year lasting up to a month depending on the size of the flock. The maintenance of the property and all that it entailed was sustained throughout the year from the 'wool cheque'. Sheep and wool in Australia have a short history compared to that of Eurasia.

Sheep originally were covered in hair and small in stature. However, by 4,000 years ago wool evolved as a covering on the skin. Over time, sheep became domesticated and farmers built up their flocks, and they chose the biggest animals, because they provided the largest skins, each of which was taken off as one piece, thus providing an adequate covering for a single person. Those animals were selected for future breeding, yielding the skins of softest wool, because of the greater comfort derived from them when worn on the human body. Eventually, the numerous breeds of sheep came about through careful selection of traits, bigger frames, thicker wool, or better meat. From Roman times to the seventeenth century British wool was regarded as the finest in Europe until the Spanish bred a sheep that was to become the backbone of the Australian wool industry. This was the Merino sheep.

Until the arrival of the First Fleet in 1787, Australia did not carry hooved or cloven animals. The animals that resided in the country kangaroos, emus, dingoes, etc., had padded, or soft, feet that did not damage the fragile land. The landscape

changed when sheep, cattle, horses and goats made inroads into the country. The sheep of 1787 were only suitable for meat, but they did not survive long enough to begin breeding. They were also not used to the Australian grasses. However, in 1797 Captains Waterhouse and Kent arrived at the Cape of Good Hope from Port Jackson, and bought 26 Merinos. These were distributed to John Macarthur, Rev. Samuel Marsden, and William Cox, to name a few, in New South Wales, and they had a role in fine-wool production in New South Wales, by interbreeding the Merinos with other breeds of sheep, enabling the sheep to become better adapted to the different Australian conditions when the eastern states opened up to the erstwhile landowner.

The Napoleonic Wars gave a boost for the fledgling wool industry in 1815 when demand from England increased because of the shortage of wool due to the war on the Spanish front. The English naval blockade of Europe also caused less German wool to be shipped to them. When hostilities ceased Australia had gained momentum in selling its wool to Britain, and by 1830 had achieved a good reputation for good-quality wool due to Australian breeders importing more Merino sheep to complement existing flocks to 2 million sheep. By 1850 wool exports from Australia had increased from £2 million to £41 million per annum, causing the Belgium and French to send representatives over to negotiate direct sales with wool producers. The increasing demand for wool encouraged breeders to develop a sheep with a shorter staple (length) therefore, ensuring that any fabrics produced from the wool were lighter, cheaper, and of higher quality than was available then. At the time, the industrial revolution had taken over from the cottage industries, creating new and improved methods of combing, spinning and weaving, thus ensuring newer and better products were made, such as worsted material used in garments and top-quality carpet. At this time cotton was becoming a favoured fibre for manufacturers, as it was light and strong, but

because the short, fine and soft Australian Merino fibres were replacing the strong harsh English long-wools in the worsted trade, cotton was used as a secondary fibre within the industry.

As explorers fanned out from Port Jackson, plentiful grazing lands were discovered in the new continent. The crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813 revealed ideal pastures and good rivers to the west. Soon, sheep were grazing there. Settlers followed the explorers far into the more distant hinterland. In Van Diemen's Land, the sheep industry had been established soon after the formation of the new settlement in 1803. When the initial overlanders arrived at Port Phillip in 1837, they found that sheep had already been shipped there from the island. Meantime, in 1834, the Hentys had settled at Portland Bay thus becoming one of the original families to begin breeding Merino sheep in Victoria. The great sheep drive extended northward into what is now Queensland where, at Moreton Bay, the official settlement had begun in 1824; and in 1838, the first overlanders arrived with stock at Adelaide, which had been settled two years before. In 1829 the Swan River settlement, separate from the eastern system, was founded in the west and grazing began there. The sheep industry had been established in every colony by the end of the 1830s giving Australia the reputation for fine wools in England. However, it would be the Peppin strain which made wool growing profitable in the drier areas where little or no wool had grown before. Back crossing two flocks of ewes between the French Rambouillet ram and the American Vermot ram from 1866, created a Merino sheep that had strong wool, and by watching which ones fared better on harsher and dry terrain, began to interbreed them. The sheep became larger framed with a stronger fleece and could withstand the rigours of a more desolate country, ideal for the outback

areas of Australia.⁶⁹ From those first few Merinos brought from the Cape of Good Hope in 1797,⁷⁰ the sheep and wool industry grew,⁷¹ as it did in South Australia.

Having originally been developed from strains introduced from the eastern states, South Australian Merinos have become the mainstay of many Australian flocks, which are based on bloodlines developed in the 1800s by South Australian parent studs such as Bungaree, Cappeedee, Anlaby, Corunna and Collinsville. Studmasters carefully improved their flocks over the years by working to breed an early maturing animal with a big, plain body that could travel long distances for food and water and adapt quickly to Australia's semi-arid pastoral zones. Their quest was successful, with the South Australian Merino accounting for a significant proportion of the entire Australian wool clip. The wool is of a medium strength staple that is much stronger than the fine wool sheep. Not only do they grow more wool than other strains in Australia, Merinos are unique in needing a minimum of care and can survive in the dry pastoral zones, in rainfall zones as low as 140mm, and can adapt to higher rainfall districts that receive up to 900mm. High fertility is also a positive trait of the South Australian Merino,⁷² which was ideal for the Pernatty area.

Dalgety and Elders

Stock and station agents were the ones who supported the pastoralists and farmers for all their needs, including finance, becoming over time large rural companies. South Australia had many stock and station agents in the early years such as E Loughton and co., Bagot, Shakes and Lewis Ltd., G & H Bennett, William Dean, Goldsborough Mort & Co, were the names of some of them,

⁶⁹ Austin, H B., *The Merino Past, Present and Probable* (Sydney, 1943), p. 90.

⁷⁰ Internet web page: www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/sheep/6570.html – "The beginnings of the sheep and wool industry in Australia".

⁷¹ SA Stud Merino Sheepbreeders http://www.merinos.com.au/history_samerino.htm

⁷⁴ SA Merino Today <http://www.merinos.com.au/pages/merino-sheep/today.php>

however, the ones that Walter and Agnes dealt with was Dalgety in the main, and Elder Smith & Co.

It was 1846 that the entity called Dalgety came into being in Victoria, dealing with the 'importation of general merchandise, and the exportation of wool and other products of the land'.⁷³ Once gold was found in Victoria the firm became involved in the buying and selling of the precious metal thus laying the foundation for the firm's financial resources. By 1857, Dalgety had consolidated woolbrokering interests in England, 1858 in New Zealand, and 1878 in Queensland and New South Wales.⁷⁴ It would not be until 1897 that Dalgety and Company opened in Adelaide, 'confining the business to shipping, with a little trade in wool and merchandise'. By 1900 more South Australian branches had opened, including Port Augusta, along with Western Australia,⁷⁵ offering a full range of stock and station, wool and produce, and financial businesses.

After World War I, government control of the wool market was relinquished and Australian products were so much in demand that 'Dalgety's profits rose from £700,000 in 1921 to over £1 million in 1928 and 1929'.⁷⁶ But then the Great Depression began affecting every country, and 'London finance, on which Australia had always relied now began to dry up and wool, the traditional basis of Australian prosperity, slumped on the world market'.⁷⁷ Dalgety managers were instructed to be extra careful in the granting of long-term loans thus helping the company through the depression while others went broke. Then World War II came and, as with Elder Smith and Co., saw the complete wool clip bought by the British government for the duration, plus one year.

⁷³ *Dalgety and Company Limited Jubilee Souvenir 1884 – 1934*. (Melbourne, 1934), p 15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p 19.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p 35.

⁷⁶ Vaughan-Thomas, Wynford, *Dalgety The Romance of a Business*. (London, 1984) p 78.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p 81.

Elders began in 1840 in Adelaide as a general and commissioning agent, using the schooner “Minerva” for trading between Port Adelaide, Fremantle and Launceston. In 1854, having secured stores at Port Adelaide, managed to obtain premises at Port Augusta, to take advantage of mining and pastoral activity.⁷⁸

In 1861, Thomas Elder and Robert Barr Smith became sole partners in the reconstructed firm of Elder, Smith & Co.⁷⁹

As pastoral development opened up in South Australia finance was needed by those who had leases, to enclose runs and buy stock. Fences were installed on the runs which allowed the stock to run loose, rather than be rounded up nightly by a shepherd. Wells were dug out with troughs put in to catch the precious water for stock to drink. Elder, Smith & Co., was instrumental in loaning many pastoralists monies to get their property up and running, but consistent drought throughout the late 1800s pushed many off the land.⁸⁰

The 1880s proved to be a difficult time for the state and for the company due to drought however, by 1889 Elder, Smith & Co., had ‘authorised capital of £1,000,000 in £10 shares with paid-up capital of £89,816 and total assets of £437,584’.⁸¹

During the 1890s, Australia was overtaken by a financial depression that caused many banks to close, while there was a recession in land and stock values. Elders came through the difficulties lightly and were able ‘to give primary producers valuable assistance in their fight to regain a footing after the crash which threatened them with insolvency’.⁸² By the early 1900s, Elders upgraded with

⁷⁸ Elder, Smith & Co, *The First Hundred Years 1839 – 1939*. (Adelaide, 1939) pp 18-19.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p 27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p 38.

⁸² *Ibid.* p 39.

wool stores and showroom additions due to the expansion in the wool industry, although in South Australia, Port Adelaide was already a wool precinct.

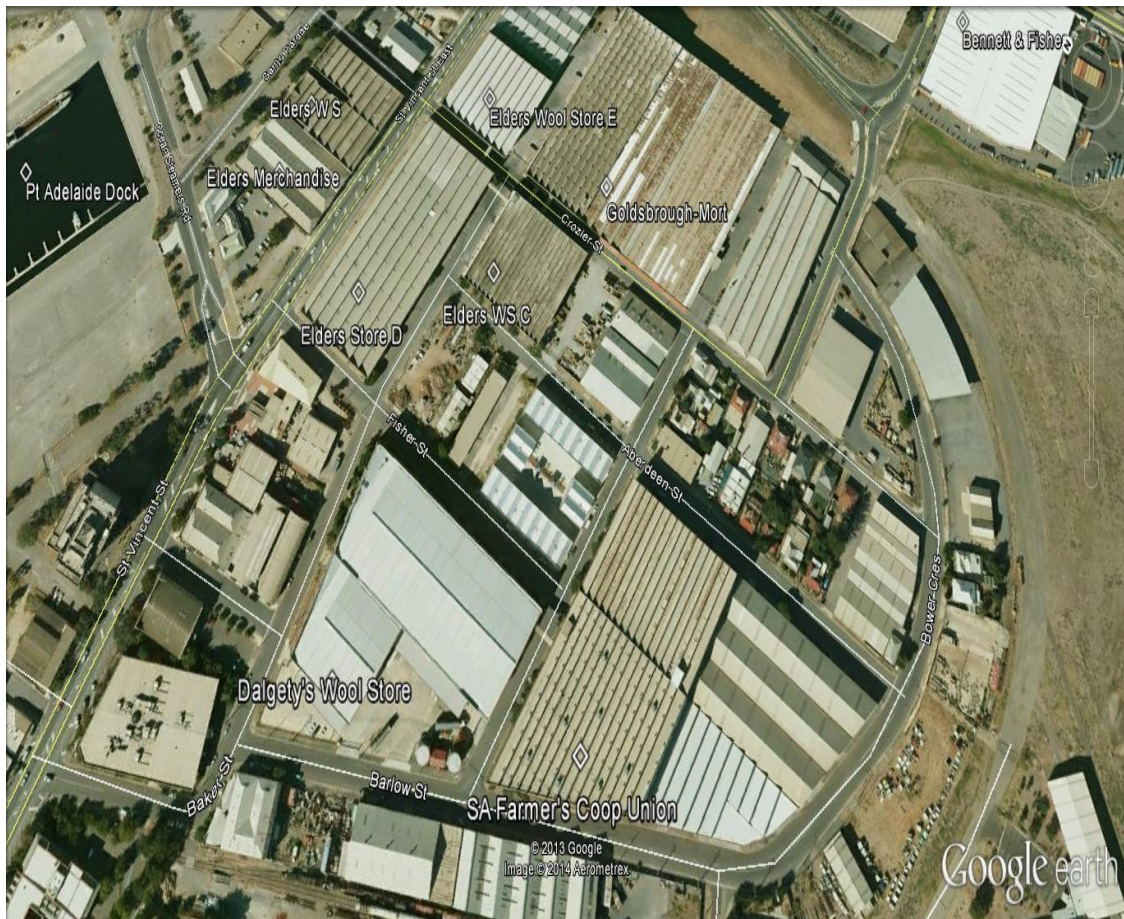
In 1880 the Port Adelaide Dock Company built Dock 1 to facilitate large ships to be loaded with wool. Port Adelaide was becoming the hub for wool classing, buying and selling, and 'the first woolstore to be erected on Santo Parade was Elder Smith & Co's in 1881', directly opposite the dock. 'Progressively more woolstores were built around the Santo Parade, St Vincent Street east area and by the early 20th century several other woolbrokers had opened stores including Bagot, Shakes and Lewis, and Luxmoore firms. Not all could be accommodated as close to the docks as Elders. The SA Farmers Union Cooperative woolstore was built at the corner of Aberdeen and Brock Streets, several blocks back from the wharves'.⁸³ The wool precinct still stands today, with the grand old buildings, as Port Adelaide has been 'declared an historic precinct. It is home to the state's most substantial and continuous group of colonial buildings'. It is situated 'between St Vincent Street and the waterfront (North Parade), and extends from Nelson Street on the west to Jubilee Street on the east'.⁸⁴ (Fig) Dalgety opened its new wool store on the 24th September 1907,⁸⁵ with a showroom floor measuring 21,000 square feet. They would build another in 1938.

⁸³ SA Memories, *Proposed wool store Port Adelaide*, State Library South Australia internet page – <http://learnonline.cc/libraryhack/showpic.php?id=3910>.

⁸⁴ -Internet-page----

http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/ourplaces/Heritage/Visiting_heritage_places/State_heritage_areas/Port_Adelaide

⁸⁵ *The Wool Industry*, The Register, Wed. 25th September 1907, p. 4. (Trove – NLA).



Pt Adelaide Wool Precinct (via Google Earth 2014) above. Dalgety Wool Store





Elders Merchandise Store above & Wool Store below





Goldsbrough Mort above & Bennett & Fisher below





SA Farmers Cooperative Union Wool Store.

There are three more big stores that belonged to Elders in the same area.

During the war years, the British government acquired the total Australian wool clip, so the auction system was held in abeyance for that time plus one year,

opening again in 1946. Britain paid a substantial figure for wool in 1942 at £70,000,000 or more (which would be about \$4 billion today), however this amount was paid yearly for the duration of the war. Both Elders and Dalgety were involved with the shipping of the wool to Britain. The Korean War of 1950 – 1953 also brought a high demand for Australian wool, especially through the United Nations, as soldiers had to fight through harsh Korean winters of -20 degrees C.

The 1951 wool season was the best Australia has ever had, passing all previous records before or since, earning £636,000,000 (or \$26.4billion), averaging approximately £180 per bale for woolgrowers. Since the rise of synthetic materials wool is no longer number one but it won't go away.⁸⁶

Dalgety and Elders had, since the 1960s, been involved in mergers and demergers, with Wesfarmers acquiring Dalgety in 1993, and in 2001 Wesfarmers Dalgety became Landmark. Elders were merged with Henry Jones IXL in 1981 and was turned into a 'diversified conglomerate', and struggled to survive. It lost many clients over the years due to 'poor financial reports and whispering campaigns'⁸⁷ but began to re-invent itself in 2009 as a truly agricultural business.

Pernatty

When the estate was divided up in 1927, 152 rams had been ordered from Collinsville to strengthen the flocks that were at South Gap, Pernatty and Roxby Downs. Of these Pernatty had 42, Roxby Downs 94, with the rest going to South

⁸⁶ *Stockowners' Annual 1941-1942*, The Stockowners' Association of South Australia (Adelaide, 1942), p32.

⁸⁷ Austin, Nigel, *How the once-mighty SA agribusiness company Elders was brought to its knees*, Herald sun, 6th December 2013.



Collinsville rams at Pernatty (year unknown).

Gap. These rams, plus those that were already within the original flock, were then put with the 3,900 ewes that were on Pernatty and from this beginning the flock was built up over time. The life expectancy of sheep ranges from 10 to 12 years, however, the productive life of ewes is between 3 to 6 years at their peak, gradually declining after 7 years. By the end of 1927, the sheep had been mustered to various areas of Pernatty, the rams to North Pernatty to be shepherded by Jas Hill. The Goodwin family, based at the Woodforde, were to make sure the vermin fence was in good order and were also responsible for 1400 ewes, as was O. Janecke, who was based at North Eliza. Walter believed that because sheep gave him and Agnes the income to live on the property, they needed to ensure the conditions were okay for the sheep. As they had no control over the weather, they could control the living arrangements for the sheep.

On 31st January 1928, Walter went to the Avenue yard and counted out 1,005 ewes and 40 rams, and with Tom, Bill and Bert Leatt, began to shift them to

Pernatty Well. Next day, Walter went to Toby Swamp to check the fencing and the water, only to find a young heifer dead, while the other men continued on with the sheep to the Willows. They then, shorn the wool from around the eyes of the sheep for clearance.

Walter, Laurie and Walty went to the South Gap Woolshed and picked out the horses that were going to Pernatty. There were eight altogether, Mina, Silverside, one roan colt, a bay filly, two for Otto Janecke, one of the Domyer horses, and one Yeltacowie colt. They were then taken to the Horse paddock.

March was a difficult month as the water was drying up, so Walter, Walty, Ted Goodwin and Bert Leatt drafted off 1,412 of the poorest Woodforde flock consisting of 1,384 ewes and 38 hoggets, to go to Pernatty Well shepherding them around, ensuring they have water. Thus, the men had brought their swags to stay overnight while doing this. Jas Hill then looked after the North Pernatty sheep, Ted Goodwin and his family the Woodforde flock, while Otto Janecke stayed at the Willows.

The fences at Old Pernatty were being repaired by the Domyer brothers, a fence had been put up in the Ram paddock by the Burgess party, while Simmonds and Williamson had worked on the division fence across the McGregor paddock, all work finished by April.

By April, the sheep at Pernatty Well were dying so Bill went and skinned three and plucked the dead wool of one. Eventually, Walty took 852 ewes to the Willows as well as a small mob from Pernatty Well into the Sandy paddock. At this time, horses, sheep and cattle needed to be sustained by hand feeding for awhile.

After a count in June, there were 7,039 sheep on Pernatty. Walter drafted out eleven horses and had them destroyed.

The first lambs on Pernatty that ran under W D & A French, were tailed in July. Tailing took place during the month at South Eliza, Pernatty Well, the Willows, and the Woodforde ensuring a busy time for the men.

Pernatty shearing was at South Gap woolshed with 12 shearers on the board, starting after smoko, on the 3rd August. It finished on the 9th, having shorn 7,839 sheep, making up 217 bales of wool. L M Sanderson was branding the bales while Otto branded the shorn sheep. F Cox carted the goods from the woolshed back to Pernatty, and then took the shearers to Bookaloo to catch the train. Most of the men had an easy day after the shearing. Ted Goodwin, his wife and daughter Mary, were brought into Pernatty homestead and stayed with Walter and Agnes for the night. After Walter took them back to the Woodforde they killed a steer that still belong to the W H Greenfield Estate. Once cut up half went to George Greenfield of south Gap Station.

In November, 1,016 ewes were moved from Acacia paddock by Walter, Walty and W Domyer, onto Old Pernatty, along with 39 rams. Jas Hill shifted back to Old Pernatty from Toby Swamp, to look after the sheep. F Cox helped him to shift his goods.

December found Laurie, Walty and M Domyer drafting 564 ewes and lambs at the Willows to take to Pernatty Well. they also shot two horses. Another eight horses were shot at the homestead. Walty, Tom and Jack shifted cattle to the Sandstone paddock, courtesy of George Greenfield, so that Sandy Rowe could draw water for them. The cattle were shifted to the Willows on the 11th January 1929.

At the end of the 1928 diary was written, 'Pernatty Station sheep shorn at General Shearing –

1772 wethers, 4,919 ewes, 110 rams (18 shorn with hand blades), 964 lambs.

Sheep bought September 27th – 21 Collinsville rams £7/7/- (2 tooth)

July 970 lambs tailed 2,465 eared.

August 39 lambs tailed 1,009 eared.

W D & A French had a credit from the 1928 wool sales of £3,869/14/3d through Dalgety & Company Ltd. (Roughly \$245,000 on 2011 figures).

1929

February found Pernatty still buying feed in for the livestock, as well as the men cutting down some scrub at Pernatty Well, for the cattle to eat. Certainly up to, and including May, chaff and nuts were being fed to the rams. The watering of the livestock had become a full time occupation for some of the men.

In July, Laurie went to Yeltacowie to notify Mr Sanderson, that there were some of his sheep outside the vermin fence at the Woodforde. Mr Sanderson then collected the sheep and took them back to Yeltacowie. On the 21st, Mr Sanderson came to Pernatty homestead and gave permission to leave the bullocks at Bonny Bluff.

August saw the Yeltacowie shearers passing through Pernatty on their way to Edeowie Station. Walty had gone to Whittata to muster the Pernatty sheep that had been agisted there, for shearing at South Gap woolshed. Walter went to muster the sheep from the Woodforde and found only 438 sheep left out of 1,471, 'an awful loss'. Walter had been given notice by Ted Goodwin, in July, that after seven years of employment on South Gap/Pernatty, he and his family would be departing on the 13th, therefore no-one was at the Woodforde for a number of days. The Pernatty shearing began at South Gap woolshed on the 19th and finished on the 23rd.

By November 27th, the cattle had been taken to Sanderson's Yeltacowie property on agistment. Three bales of chaff had been destroyed at Bookaloo Railway Siding by stray horses. However, December saw more cattle agisted, this time to Yudnapinna Station. Walter had the rams put with the ewes but, it wasn't working too well.

Walter stated at the end of the 1929* diary, '5,000 sheep lost from shearing to shearing due to drought'.

*This year was also the start of the Great Depression affecting Australia badly. It began with the Wall Street crash in New York in October 1929 until 1932, and went around the world. Wool and wheat prices plummeted which put rural industries in a parlous state, as well as other employment. Unemployment grew nationwide and the economy would not bounce back until 1936 when manufacturing industries grew.

1930

In January, 53 sheep were moved from the Acacia paddock and yarded at the Top Tank. They were eventually moved to the Elizabeth Waterhole along with others. Jack and Edmund Willie French (brother of Walter), shifted 417 sheep from the Woodforde to South Eliza. Walter helped to draft 430 ewes for South Eliza, 289 of the Willows wethers, plus 19 young wethers, to be let back in Pernatty Well, along with 12 wethers and two South Gap sheep for the Ration paddock. The rams were to be taken from the ewes by the end of March for lambing to finish toward the end of August, ready for the September at South Gap woolshed.

The total number of ewes serviced was 2,683 from which 1,478 lambs dropped by October 10th, giving a return of 55%. Walter purchased nine horses for £31/-/-

from Roxby Downs and Purple Downs Stations, plus three private horses for £30, while three horses were broken in.

Wool that was sold in 21 lots brought in £893/11/5d, after commission and fees.

1931

On March 18th, Walter went to Jamestown and Spalding, then out to Bob Bailey's place to buy 21 East Lynet rams and 770 ewes and sheep on the trip, for Pernatty Station for re-stocking purposes. He went to Bookaloo two days later to help unload the sheep which came by the 'Tea & Sugar' train.

On the 11th August, the lowest price per bale for thirty years was given at the first wool sales. Pernatty had no wool entered in that sale. Shearing began on the 31st, at South Gap woolshed with 10 shearers on board with 3,301 sheep shorn in the first three days, then it rained, and 3,570 were shorn in the following four days. Walter settled up with Mr Pritchard for sheep shorn, also H Turnbull, F Kluge, and R Green, who were at the woolshed. Mr Pritchard finished up, paid off his staff and started enroute to Uno Station. There were 189 bales of wool fetching £2,064/5/5d, after commission and fees.

1932

Walter started the Pernatty shearing at South Gap woolshed on the 29th July, with extra men, H Turnbull as classer, L M Sanderson as bale brander, R Green and J Drinkwater as yardmen, and Mr A R Pritchard as Boss of the Board and Expert. Shearing finished on the 10th August, with the shearers going to Andamooka.

In September, Walter and Agnes heard over the wireless that the Pernatty wool prices were the highest. There had been 10,235 sheep shorn making a total of 207 bales of wool. After the wool was sold Pernatty's income was £2,142 for the year.

1933

A crop of very nice young foals from the Digama colt purchased from W Kite was the first for many years. Wool was up in price with Pernatty's top price 201/4d., per pound, which was really a good price and could look about with confidence. The net income for the year, from wool, was £3,868/-/16d.

1934

On the 15th February, Norman Greenfield came along in his car looking for agistment for his sheep.

The first shearing started at Corraberra on the 3rd May, doing about 750 Purple Downs ewes that had been bought. There were two shearers, two roustabouts, a woolclasser, and Tom. By the 15th the weather was dry and calm with no wind to drive the windmills, and the lambs were dying at the troughs.

In June, C Dighton brought two buyers, Messrs Kardachi and Nankervill, out to Pernatty to inspect the wethers. They bought 2,200 wethers at 19/6d each to be delivered at Bookaloo to be put on the train.

Walter went over to South gap Station on the 15th July, to see George Greenfield in reference to shearing early, to follow on after Yeltacowie Station, 'but George would not agree to let us start in his woolshed', for that time. So shearing was in September with seven shearers on board finishing on the 28th. There were 208 bales of wool pressed.

1935

On the 28th April, 'Fred Welk and party arrived at the station with the first load of material for the Pernatty Woolshed. Took it out and unloaded'. On the 3rd May, the first pole was put up. By the 22nd July, Fred Welk and his workers had finished the Woolshed, shearers' quarters and the sheep pens, had packed up and went back

to Port Augusta. This enabled Walter and Agnes to go to Port Augusta two days later to buy crockery, cutlery, pots and pans, and other sundry items, for the shearers' kitchen.

Pernatty's sheep went into the new Woolshed on the 6th August, to begin shearing the next day, under dry and droughty conditions. When finished on the 16th, 4,481 sheep had been shorn. By December however, the sheep were being watered on the Sandstone Wells, then letting them go back into the Willows paddock, due to the weather conditions.



Building the Woolshed at Pernatty 1935.

1936

Walter wrote to George Greenfield to give permission for him to put South Gap sheep into North Tiffen paddock.

From February the sheep were drafted at the Woolshed, 770 wethers and 1,130 ewes, for crutching. Coming up from Corraberra Station was a flock of sheep which was yarded at the Woolshed, then to continue onto North Eliza, with Jack French as drover. He brought a second lot, consisting of 1,501 sheep, ten days later. They were all to be crutched and shorn, going back to Corraberra in September.

In July, Tom and Jack French had started to repair the Vermin Fence north of Pernatty and Yeltacowie to about 1 mile west of Bodman Gate.

Shearing began on 17th August, with six shearers, five shed hands, one woolpresser, and L Ellis who was Woolclasser and Boss of the Board, and Mr Brooks as Expert. They finished shearing having done 7,375 sheep making 202 bales of wool. The sheep were in a weak and poor condition.

In December the approximate number of sheep on Pernatty were; the Willows 660, the Woodforde 690, Toby Swamp 800, Pernatty Well 1270, Yeltacowie 250, the Acacia paddock 750 and North Tiffen 147, totalling 4,567 sheep.

1937

Twenty-three cattle were taken to Yeltacowie in January while the sheep were watered at the Sandstone. Walter and Agnes heard a report that the Corraberra wethers sold well at Quorn at 19/6d with the average at 19/3d.

February saw the men mustering 830 sheep from the Willows to the Woolshed and went through them for blowflies, along with 15 rams from Acacia paddock, two rams from the Horse paddock, and 14 rams from Pernatty Well, all enroute to Yeltacowie. They then, branded and earmarked 14 two year old cattle, two foals and castrated one. Afterwards, 589 sheep and 23 lambs were crutched. Walter

went to Wilmington market on the 25th and bought 429 sheep to put on the road to Pernatty Station.

In March, Walter went to the Quorn market purchasing 505 mixed sheep, consisting of ewes and hoggets to go to Corraberra and then onto Pernatty. These were taken to the Woolshed to be drafted and crutched, then 1,928 ewes to go to North Gap while 543 hoggets went to Pernatty Well.

April – Yeltacowie woolshed was used for the first time under the Pernatty ownership. The machinery worked well and everything went okay, while crutching 214 sheep. The men from Dalgety were looking around Yeltacowie and stayed until May. In the meantime, 2,218 sheep and 70 rams were put at North Eliza from the Woodforde, as the flies were very bad in the sheep.

June found the men moving 124 cattle from Old Pernatty to North Gap. They cut out 56 fat cattle for the buyer to inspect and sold them to J H Chapman of Quorn.

In August, the shearers and shedhands came by Birdseye Bus, including Mr Edwards the Expert, however there was no cook. She came next day, along with a shearer, and were picked up at South Gap woolshed. There were 6,420 sheep shorn, no lambs though, because they were too small.

Fred Welk picked up the last load of wool on 14th September. The lambs, all 1,135 of them, were shorn further on in the month, with the wool picked through and sorted which made up five bales.

The wool sales in November brought in £4,300.



Pernatty wool bales 2008

1938

Crutching took place at the Woolshed in January, as well as tailing. They marked 424 lambs and put them into the Woolly paddock. There had been 666 ewes, 39 rams and eight wethers done with the lambs. Crutching continued throughout most of the year having done over 14,000 sheep.

In May, Walter went to South Eliza and found plenty of little lambs knocking about among the sheep, 'a fine drop with many pairs of twins'. Walter and Walty 'took Messrs Reid and Jenkins from Dalgety, and Mr A L Collins out to South Eliza, on to North Eliza and across to the Woodforde and home. Saw a good many ewes and lambs at the three places, appear to be a fine lot of lambs'.

June saw the crutching of 477 hoggets from South Eliza and Yeltacowie Waterhole. 632 hoggets from Wilson's and South Eliza paddocks were put on Station dam. 127 hoggets and 25 ration ewes went to Yeltacowie from Pernatty Well, as did 185 ewes and 190 lambs from Woolly paddock. The men also tailed 514 lambs and crutched 99 ewes and let them go into the Woolly paddock.

August found Walter and Agnes going to Port Augusta to order goods for shearing and other business. Once back at Pernatty, they went to the Woolshed to finish off the receiving yard, cleaned up and straightened out the huts and woolshed. Shearing began on the morning of the 9th. One of the shearers shored 215 ewes and lambs in a day, highest tally for Pernatty. General shearing finished, with about 160 lambs to shear, on the on the 2nd September. Total sheep shorn was 14,346, with the shearers and shed hands leaving the woolshed. The lambs were done next day. The wool sale net was about £3,000.

1939

Walter went to Quorn market to see how the values for sheep were, up 5/- to 6/-, while the cattle sold exceptionally well. L Hacket and Bill fixed the sheepyard at Yeltacowie woolshed. Walter went over to Yeltacowie before breakfast and took kerosene over for wiggging. He helped yard the sheep and picked up the wool off the board. The sheep were put through fast with about 2,000 all wigged.

In April, Laurie took 10 mixed cattle to Port Augusta to load for Quorn market. They went for 8/9d per head. S Wells took 172 ewes to market netting 14/- per head. Throughout the month, and May, crutching and mustering were being carried on either at Yeltacowie or Pernatty woolsheds. On the 26th Jack H French, drover, camped at Toby Swamp with a mob of sheep on the way to Andamooka Station. Walter went to Bottle Hill to see Jack about droving 2,325 Pernatty wethers on the 27th June for the market which was on the 10th July. Walter and

Walty went to Quorn to view the selling under cold and wet conditions. The wethers sold for 19/- each.

Shearing went from the 9th August to 1st September, finishing at 5.45 pm, with 14,845 sheep shorn making 352 bales of wool. The wool was dealt with under the 'Appraisement System'.

On the 3rd September, Britain declared war on Germany. The total Australian wool clip was bought by the British Government, which proved a godsend for all graziers as most of the European markets were lost during those six years of war. The Wool Appraisement system was carried out quickly and efficiently, especially in South Australia, and, although the value of wool was on the conservative side, woolgrowers 'received a dividend of 8%, in addition to 10% "Retention Money"'.⁸⁸ So 'for the duration of the war, and for one year after, we know that Britain will take our wool at a fixed price'.⁸⁹

1940

January brought a saddler and his son to Pernatty and repaired one of the saddles. They went onto Arcoona Station. C Ketteringham went out to the Woodforde in the truck to fix up the Vermin fence.

The men went out drafting and mustering sheep in February, to and from various paddocks. Tom King had taken their swags and the cooking gear to Camel Dam in the Buick. J H French, drover, and party arrived at Pernatty to take 1522 maiden ewes to Corraberra. He came back in March to take 1,401 wethers to the Quorn market.

In June Allan Robins went to meet Jack on the north side of Toby Swamp paddock as the fence was down in three places and three horses were dead.

⁸⁸ 1939-40 *Stockowners' Annual*, issued by the Stockowners' Association of South Australia (Adelaide, 1940) p. 36.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p 42.

Shearing began on the 15th July, at Corraberra, with C Gartner as contractor. It finished on the 30th with 5,034 sheep shorn giving 168 bales of wool. Mr Gartner and his team then came to Pernatty, for shearing. The cook was a woman with two children. It finished on the 18th August with 8,317 sheep shorn and 217 bales. Walter went out to the Woolshed and helped clear up around the shearers' quarters, kitchen and woolshed.

The rest of the year dealt with the moving and branding of cattle, making sure they had feed and water. Horses, too, were also in the mix. Most of the stock was low in condition but okay.

1941

Walter went to Port Augusta to make arrangements for getting the sheep from Corraberra to Pernatty in January. Corraberra is very dry. There were 16 railway vans made available to load 2,946 sheep at the 13 mile at Corraberra. Walter then helped unload them at Bookaloo. Walty, E H French, W Godfrey, R Starr and K Hodshon brought the sheep to the Golden Link. Jack was the cook and brought the swags, cooking gear, and the horse gear. The sheep were taken to North Gap next day, where they rested.

In June, Messrs Dighton and Dare of Millers Creek Station, came to Pernatty and stayed the night, continuing to Roxby downs Station with Walter, to inspect a mob of wethers , but did not make a deal. Walter finally bought 1,800 the next day. They were to be delivered at the Elizabeth by the Greenfield brothers either on the 17th or the 18th. The wethers arrived at Pernatty Woolshed on the 20th.

At the end of July, Walty and Jack had fixed up a water closet for the shearers' female cook at the quarters, and cleaned up some of the rooms. They then cleaned out the woolshed and engine room, clippers, and checked the driving belt.

Shearing began on the 8th August, with six shearers and shedhands. Four days later, two of them had suffered injuries, with a third cutting his hand two days later. On the 23rd, the shearers gave a concert at Pernatty Woolshed. This snippet was in The Advertiser, in the 'Out Among the People' section,

I had a note from Charles Connell (woolclasser) to say that the shearers at Pernatty Station, north-west of Port Augusta, arranged a concert and dance in the woolshed in aid of the Cheer Up Hut, and netted £7 for the worthy cause. Among the guests were the owners of Pernatty (Mr and Mrs W D French) and the latter's mother, Mrs Greenfield, a pioneer of the north-west. After the dance they all had supper in the shearers' kitchen. A pair of shearer's bag boots was sold for 23/6d, and the money given by the owner to the fund.⁹⁰

Shearing finished at 9 am on the 26th, with 9,497 sheep shorn giving 297 bales of wool.

October saw 45 donkeys put out at Pernatty Well paddock to North Pernatty, 18 of which belonged to Bert Barber, the others to the station. Jack put five horses out into the Willows from the Horse paddock.

1942

January saw the shifting of livestock from, and to, places due to the lack of water. The South Eliza flock of 2,160 sheep were taken to the Willows, as were 999 ewes, lambs and 31 rams, from Toby Swamp. Jack and R Burns collected 48 donkeys from North paddock, and took 10 to the Racecourse yard on the way to Anderson Bank. He also shifted cattle from White Dam to Bonny's Bluff.

In March, Walter took four mares, Melba, Nancy, Mary and Bessie, to hard Struggle to put with the stallion, Roar. The saddle horses went to Toby Swamp.

⁹⁰ 'Out Among the People', The Advertiser, Monday 1 September 1941, p.9.

Fifty-two cows and calves from Yeltacowie went into the Station yard for branding, then onto Toby Swamp, making 160 cattle there.

In August, Walter heard the report that the South Gap shearers had gone onto Port Augusta and did not call into the woolshed to begin shearing. However, Mr Gartner, shearers and roustabout turned up a week later at the Woolshed, along with all the hands. Shearing began on the 28th about 10.15 am, with six shearers on board, and finished on 10th September, having done 9,275 sheep. The shearers then went to South Gap to do the sheep there. Shearing was very difficult throughout but Pernatty staff helped out until the first week of October.

Walter went to the Quorn market to inspect the wethers that came down from Purple Downs. He purchased 1,400 at 15/9d each.

1944

Shearing in 1943 and 1944 began earlier in May. It was a bad time for shearing in 1944 due to windy and dusty conditions however, 4,461 sheep were all at the Woolshed to be done, as well as tarring and branding. J Winton finished up when shearing stopped and went back to South gap. The Pernatty men shored another 888 sheep afterwards.⁹¹

In October, Bert Barber shifted his family to Mt Gunson to live, to look after the horses and YMG sheep. John was to help his father. The rams at Pernatty were wigged as they were wool blind.

By December, many of the sheep and cattle were either bogged or dead, due to the heat.

⁹¹ See the chapter on 'Drought'.

1945

On January 20th, new rams came from Collinsville and were crutched and had the Pernatty earmark done. Jim and Colin French helped in the Woolly paddock and collected 37 sheep and five lambs at the Tank to yard.

Mr Gartner arrived with his shearers at the Woolshed. All fairly happy and settled down and contented, better than Walter expected, although the day before the finish the shearers got a bit rough, (but whether with each other or the sheep is not stated). Finished up on June 1st, having shorn 5,063 sheep, then they left late.

In June, Walter went out to the Woolshed with J Fullerton (butcher) to inspect the wethers to load in two lots, the first on the Monday, the balance in six weeks. Laurie came along with Colin to see the sale. A police constable, J Liebett, came out to inspect South Gap shearing quarters. All went back to Port Augusta.

1946

1,753 Woodforde ewes turned into the Shorn paddock with lambs and rams. Barbers brought the sheep to the Woodforde gate where Walty, Colin and Walter brought them into the Acacia paddock. Barber's time is nearly up.

March – Walty and Tom out with the cattle, 37 steers and two cows, for the market at Quorn. One of the cows had her horns cut off. They were taken to Bookaloo to be loaded on the train. The cattle were sold for; 19 steers £16/15/-, 10 steers £14/-/-, mixed £12/-/-, with an average of £16/13/8d.

Shearing began on 17th July with five shearers, and finished on the 31st at afternoon smoko. The first auction of wool to be sold after the Wool Appraisement System concluded was held on the 3rd September. Pernatty received a good price for its wool.

1947

At the end of April, early May, 56 cattle were mustered from Old Pernatty to go to Bookaloo for Quorn market. They were sold as ; 41 steers averaging £16/9/3d, 9 heifers £10/9/2d, three cows £14/7/6d, one Oakden Hills steer £27/7/6, and one steer for 'Food for Britain'* £19/5/-.

*When the war was over in Britain, the austerity measures of rationing food, petrol and clothing continued until 1952. The emphasis was on exports by the British government, but for the ordinary person it meant that the 'weekly ration of thirteen ounces of meat, one and a half ounces of cheese, six ounces of butter and margarine, one ounce of cooking fat, eight ounces of sugar, two pints of milk, and a solitary egg,' was all they could shop for. However, 'there were some extra provisions for children. The housewife had to queue up at length for meagre rations of mixed quality'.⁹² So, Australian farmers and pastoralists did their share to ensure that Britain received meat, while Canada sent wheat and timber, and dairy products came from New Zealand.⁹³

In July, 946 ewes were wiggged along with 1,080 the lambs tailed, being 108% lambs to ewes. Walter, Walty, Jack and Tom cleaned up the Woolshed from the crutching and wiggging, and pressed two bales of wool. Shearing began at the end of the month with six shearers. When shearing finished on the 22nd August, having shorn 14,183 sheep, there were 430 bales of wool pressed, with one bale of black wool for the Country Women's Association, as per Agnes.

On the 4th September, Pernatty wool was sold for the record price of 54 and a quarter pence per pound.

⁹² Morgan, Kenneth O., *Labour in Power 1945-1951*. (Oxford, 1984), p. 369.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.192.

Colin and Geof brought the ration sheep in and set rabbit traps. Walty, Jack, Jim, Geof, Colin, and Albert Ward went to Toby Swamp and brought 70 cattle to be branded there. They then took them to White Dam.

1948

In March, Chick Daw and family were working on the Woolshed to expand by putting in extra rooms and capacity. A site was marked out for the Coopers sheep dip at Acacia Tank. The Willows sheep, 445 in number, were crutched then taken to the Tank. Bob Farr and Colin French went out and saw the rams, 88 of them out of 125. There were no flies on them. The sheep dip was connected up properly by the Daws.

End of May early June found Colin bringing in the horses out of the Acacia to get Ding Dong for Tom. Albert Ward and Bob Farr started out for Mt Gunson next day, with Ding Dong and Aristocrat, one cow and calf for milking, from the Homestead. They met Bill and Gerald Dawson from Yeltacowie, at the Avenue. They brought back the working horse Peter, which was going to Mundallio. Tom met Bill and Gerald along the road next day to take his lot of animals. On the 4th, Albert Ward started away for Mundallio with Jack's horses Rocky, Ned, Stowie, and Peter the draught horse.

August – Mrs H Daw and Mrs Walty (Mildred) French went out to the Woolshed and cleaned up a lot of the gear in the shearers' kitchen. Mr Gartner brought the shearing team from Oakden Hills Station. Shearing went well from the start, going for nine days and doing 11,555 sheep giving 350 bales. Walty, H Daw, and D Campbell started to put up the fences to form the forcing yards into the sheep dip.

October – The price of wool at the sales was 59 and three quarter pence per pound. The sheep dip was tried out with a larger pulley for the dip engine and it worked satisfactorily.

November – The first sheep dipped on Pernatty with a Coopers shower dip with 334 done. 2,206 South Eliza sheep dipped and yarded at Pernatty Well several days later. Walter and Walty pressed up two bales of wool, one of them black to go to Elder Smith for the CWA.

1949

February found Colin crutching wethers and ewes. Out of 3,327 sheep he had done 170. His Grandpa Walter was pleased, 'did exceptionally well for a beginner'.

May – Laurie Clark and mate were at Old Pernatty fixing up the stockyard. Colin took some food out to them two weeks later and found they had finished. He came back, got a horse and brought Laurie back to the homestead.

July – Walty went to the Woolshed and brought in several of the gates and fixed the broken ones. Henry Daw, who is also at the Woolshed and brought in the slide gates from the pens in the shed, cut them so that they would swing both ways. Both of them took all the gates back and fixed them on the pens.

Shearing began on the 9th August and went till 2nd September. Pernatty got top price for wool at the October sales at 85 and a quarter pence per pound.

December saw Colin milking the cows, painted the sheep skins, and cleaned up the gallows. Another day he went along the south end of the Woodforde to Welcome Dam, picked up a ram and took it to the Waterhole, and shifted sheep from the Rockhole. Geof went along the Woodforde fence to North Tiffen creek, got nine sheep in the Acacia and took them to the other sheep at the Waterhole.

1950

January – Bill went out to the Elizabeth to meet up with the men from Arcoona Station who were looking for their sheep. Bill found them in the Yeltacowie

paddock. Walty mustered up the wethers from Pernatty Well and took them to the Woolshed, wiggling many of them. Walty, Colin and Albert went out to the White Dam and pulled a cow that had a broken leg, out of the bog, and then got a block in the Gum creek for the meathouse.

March – 1,228 Woodforde ewes were crutched and with 1,612 hoggets went to South Eliza.

April – 92 mixed cattle were loaded at Bookaloo for the sale at Stirling North. Albert went with them to look after them until the sale. It was a very good cattle sale averaging just under £22 per head, making £2,023/2/6d.

May – Colin went over to Hard Struggle and fixed a broken gate, coming back over the Tablelands. He picked up 40 odd wethers at Toby Swamp and brought them home. Walter heard over the wireless that Mundallio's wool price was 115d, while Corraberra's got 93 and a quarter pence. 'Wonderful'.

June – George Greenfield had asked permission from Walter to dip his sheep at Pernatty. He brought 2,076 ewes and let them into the Woolly paddock when done, then took them back to South Gap. He dipped another 3,000 a few days later.

September – the Woolshed was cleaned up, then Mr Gartner arrived with a part of the shearing team from Hiltaba Station. Started with four shearers who were very slow, eventually only two were on the boards as the others had flu after a day. 'It looks like a slow motion picture', wrote Walter. He sent a telegram to Mr Gartner to send a woolclasser or shearing would be hung up. Mr Romaine, woolclasser, had left the job at the shed to take up another shed that wanted him.

It was early October when woolclasser John Bell came along with H Mc Dowell. Shearer Drysdale came as well with Expert O Charlton, 'who' Walter wrote, 'was a

cot case'. Walty went out to the shed looking after the work going on. He found generally in an awful mess with drunks. Walter rang Tom to go to Woocalla to ring Gartner to come up as his team was in a terrible mess with drunks. Stationhand Tom Clifton got knocked out with a drunken wool picker. Tom French went into Woocalla and rang Mr Gartner that his men had run amok with drink, and the shearers had sacked the cook and the roustabout. So John Bell started as Boss of the Board while woolclassing. Walter found things generally rough. Mr Gartner came during the night and brought a woolclasser to replace John Bell who was made Expert, as Charlton was not working as he was too drunk. There was a general re-organisation by Mr Gartner with five shearers on the board. The cook and the roustabout left, Charlton was sacked, while the woolpresser was put in as cook for the rest of the time, and F Mitchell was made woolclasser in place of Bell, who became Boss of the board and Expert. Mr Gartner left again for town and took Kenna, the sick shearer, with him. Colin French and Bob Farr did the woolpressing while the presser worked in the kitchen.

On the 8th October, Alf Higginbottom came along in his truck and took 29 bales of wool away. He brought the new shearers cook with him, Brady by name. Fred Digance also came for a load of wool and brought a shearer and shedhand with him. The woolpresser Colin Foster strained his side and left on the mail truck. J Bell, overseer and expert, gave a minute's notice as did the woolclasser. They left on the wool trucks with Walter writing, 'neither of them has any principle'. Tom went to Woocalla again to ring Mr Gartner about the situation at the Woolshed and was told he was arranging to send a shearer, woolpresser, and a woolclasser to Pernatty the next day. They did arrive by taxi and a full shearing board was in action. Shearing finished on the 24th with 14,948 sheep done. The total wool weight measured by Walter was 76 tons, 3 hundredweight, 3 stone, 17 pounds, culminating in 520 bales. Pernatty had top price with 176 pence per pound.

1951

March – Mr Butterworth brought out Ned Holtham to see the wethers and cattle at the Willows. Laurie came along with them. The livestock were all in good order. The stationhands were mustering sheep from Good Friday Dam to go to the Woolshed, while Colin took the truck to the Woodforde with the musterers gear. Walter and Walty went to Quorn to see the sale of cattle and sheep to get an insight on the prices. The topline of woolly wethers sold at £17/6/6d, this being the highest price Walter had ever seen for sheep. The cattle were up to £30 each. They went back to Mundallio to stay the night. Colin was supposed to go with Walter, but after he brought the horses in, shod Trigger and rode him, he had a bad buster when the saddle came over the horses head. He felt unwell afterwards for awhile. Jackie Domyer rode Trigger instead.

At the end of March, 120 mixed cattle were sold privately at Bookaloo. Laurie and Jack came up with buyers Ned Holtham and Jack Fullerton in Dalgety's car. Holtham bought 49 bullocks and steers at £26/10/- per head. They were loaded on to trucks to go to Port Augusta.

August – Walty took all the chaps out to the Woolshed, cleaned and washed up the kitchen and put a new wheel and axle on the woolpress. Mr Gartner arrived at the station with the shearers at night. Things were generally very muddy and wet so no sheep were yarded. Shearing began a week after arrival with six shearers on the board. Walty had a bad day with the Blackstone engine breaking down at the Woolshed, so shifted the Lister 5 HP from the sheep dip and got things going towards evening, causing a stoppage for nearly the whole day. Shearing finished three weeks later, having done 14,906 sheep giving 363 bales of wool.

1952

February – Walty, Mildred and Graham went to Corraberra to have a look around Glen Verne to see about putting wethers there. There was not enough water so they made arrangements to put some at Mundallio. Walty and family then returned to Pernatty after making arrangements to sell 600 wethers to Jack Fullerton, and 200 to Holtham and Sheriff at £3/10/- to be delivered to Stirling North. Walty picked out 1319 wethers from the Willows which were eventually loaded onto 7 1/2 railway vans at Bookaloo.

March – Walty, Colin, Geof, J McDonald and G Meeuusen went out to the Woolshed and rigged the new Lister diesel engine on old concrete block of the Perry engine. They found white ants in the corner of the engine room and started to pull out the posts the white ants had eaten away. They then renewed the timber in the room.

May – Ray Gartner arrived and began to put in the lights at the Woolshed with Ted Surman helping him. The men from Pernatty went out to the Woolshed to put in the concrete block for the lighting engine and put up posts for the electric light. They put a door stop on the building as well as posts for the wires from the hut to the Experts quarters.

End July/ early August – Walty, Colin and J McDonald were washing up the dishes and kitchen at the Woolshed. With Geof and Dick Press they carted gravel and put floors in the meat shed and engine house. C Gartner arrived with most of the shearers. Both he and the Expert looked over the machinery for a few days to check it was in good order. Shearing finished on 11th September with 14,999 sheep shorn.

October – Walty went out to the Woolshed with the sheep buyers Saunders and Roundtree of Ardrossan, and Mr Butterworth of Dalgety. He sold 850 ewes for

22/6d (£960) with 154 young ewes at £2/10/- (£385). Colin and Dick Press took the sale ewes to the Willows the first day, then to South Gap (2), Wongamudla (3), the Netting Gate (4), then to Bookaloo. Geof followed the drovers with the cooking cart.

1953

The men spent most of January fixing fences and gates at Toby Swamp, Old Pernatty and Gum Creek at the Woolshed.

February – Walter and Jack went to Corraberra and sold 860 wethers to Jack Fullerton to be delivered in three segments. Walty and Colin went down around the old woolshed and Commonwealth Dam and came up the creek to put 73 cattle into the paddock at Old Pernatty. They then branded 53 of them. Afterwards Colin and Geof took the cattle to Hipworth Dam on Yeltacowie.

March – the men were mustering and crutching over 3,000 sheep and taking them to various places, Pernatty Well, South Eliza and to the Rockhole in South Woodforde. Colin brought the horses in from the Willows to break in Chiquita and Comedy.

July/August – Walty cleaned up at the Woolshed to get ready for the shearers. They arrived from Oakden Hills with Mr Gartner, who went onto Adelaide. A fire started in the shearers' quarters and burnt out one room with two of the shearers losing all their belongings. Mr Butterworth and Eric Holder from Dalgety came to inspect the damage for insurance purposes, as did two police officers from Woomera. The shearers left on the 20th August by cars and the station truck. They had shorn 11,963 sheep.

November – Colin and Tom took 671 wethers to Bookaloo with Geof taking the truck, swags and food for the drovers. They stayed at night at South Gap

woolshed, Wongamudla, and the Netting Gate, before loading onto the railway vans. Walty and Brian Joslyn shifted the cattle from hard Struggle to Toby Swamp and from Old Pernatty to Greenfields Bluff.

1954

May – Colin made a frame for the truck to carry the sheep. Walty went to Martindale, around Burra to Old Canowie, and bought two Polled Shorthorn bulls, one red and one light red roan. He went to Port Augusta and out to Corraberra to draft 380 aged ewes for sale. He sold 265 aged ewes at £2/10/- to Wheadon of Hawker, and returned to Pernatty. Colin and Bob took 365 wethers to South Gap woolshed, Wongamudla, to the Netting Gate, and loaded them at Bookaloo to Stirling North for Mundallio. Colin and Bob then untrucked the two Canowie bulls and 21 cattle from Mundallio, and brought them to Whittata. Geof had been in charge of the truck, swags and food for the journey. The cattle were put at Martin's Dam.

July – R Gartner arrived with some of the shearing team from Oakden Hills, others came in a taxi. Messrs Butterworth and Barlow of Dalgety, came to observe the shearing, and brought a male cook with them, Frank Barnes. J Nash woolclasser, and Gilbert, a shearer, left the shed so Mr Gartner carried on woolclassing. A total of 11,045 sheep were shorn.

November – Walty went to the Quorn sale, had a good sale of Pernatty and Corraberra sheep with 113 wethers at 49/3d, 28 wethers at 51/6d, 121 two and four year old ewes at 57/6d, 110 aged ewes at 40/1d, 150 aged ewes at 32/4d, 202 at 31/6d, 39 at 13/6d, 3 black ewes at 24/6d. Corraberra had 95 two year old ewes at 73/4d, and 14 at 50/9d.

1955

January – Geof took the men to South Eliza and onto Anzac to make a small yard to catch the rams then brought them to the Horse paddock. Colin and Mildred took 20 rams to Corraberra in the Austin truck.

March – Colin welded up two new gates from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch pipe for the woolshed gates. Along with Geof, Tom, and Brian Joslyn, he brought the sheep from South Eliza to the Woolshed, drafted them and put 1,173 hoggets and wethers to Pernatty Well. 2,371 ewes were crutched.

May – Geof and Tom went over to North gap and cleaned up the rams and put a new gate on the boundary fence that had been left by George Greenfield of South Gap Station, and then they went onto fix a gate on the road to Toby Swamp. Walty baled up some sheep skins while Geof, Brian and Dick branded the bales and pressed some wool at the shed.

July – Geof and Tom were breaking in the black filly and Midnight's foal, Comic Court. Colin and Geof mustered the sheep from the Shorn paddock, and with Walty, picked out the fly-blown ones, crutched them, then took the sheep, 1,772 ewes and wethers, to the Willows.

August – The shearing team arrived from Oakden Hills, five shearers plus one to come with R Gartner, overseer, starting on the 18th. Colin and Joe went up around the Woodforde and South Eliza and found a black part collie dog at the hut. (Nothing more was said about it). Shearing finished on the 22nd September with the shearers leaving by taxi and car to go to Port Augusta.

November – Walter and Walty went to Mr Bowman's at Glencoe near Melrose, with Dalgety, to inspect and purchase a Polled Hereford bull at 125 guineas. Colin and Tom shifted the engine from the dip back to the woodheap and put the

bearings in. Walty and Colin went to Adelaide wools sale with H Holmes of Dalgety. They saw some cattle sold at the abattoirs on the way down. Pernatty wool sold for 751/2d per pound on 25 bales.

1956

January – Walter and Walty went down to Crystal Brook with H Holmes to have a look at the livestock sale. They then went to Glen Verne and sold 599 wethers to Metro Butchers (Adelaide) at £3/3/- per head. Then to Corraberra to inspect other wethers but did not sell them. The Pernatty men were drafting and branding sale cattle at Old Pernatty to truck from Bookaloo. Walter, Agnes and Walty went to Port Augusta for the cattle sale at Stirling North, where 101 cattle averaged £33/11/6d.

April – The Arcoona men collected 175 of their sheep at Mahomet Dam. Sheep were being crutched at YMG in a shed that Colin had put up.

August – Walty, Graham, and J Cobbin went up to Bosworth Station to look for the wethers that got out at Sells and found 212 of them in No. 2 paddock, then returned them to Sells. They went back again and collected 304 sheep and put them in to Wilson's paddock. Colin, Tom and Brian were cleaning up around the Woolshed. John McDonald took Mildred, Margaret Hennesey, Grace Mortlock and Mrs McDonald out to fix the pillows and mattresses in the shearers' quarters. The shearing team began to shear with a full woolshed.

September – Walter and Walty went out to the Woolshed with Dalgety to see the shearing. They sold 1,150 aged ewes to two South-eastern buyers at 62/6d per head to be delivered to Bookaloo. When shearing finished there had been 16,689 sheep shorn. Walter, Walty and Colin went to the Stirling North sale on the way to see the wool sale in Adelaide, with H Holmes. The wool sold at 108d per pound, the highest price of the day and equal highest for the sale.

October – Messrs Patterson and Holmes from Dalgety brought Bill Fraser to inspect the young ewes. They also brought Jim Cahalan of metro Meat Company to inspect the wethers that were at the Woolshed. They bought 1,285 41/2 year old wethers for £3 per head, 400 young ewes for 95/-, and 50 young ewes at 85/- to Bill Fraser. Messrs Patterson, Fraser and Cahalan returned to Adelaide, while Mr Holmes inspected the sheep while waiting for them to be transported.

December – The men were drafting cattle at old Pernatty for Stirling North. The cattle broke out of the yard but the men gathered them up and took them to Toby Swamp. Colin, Tom and Ray Parkinson, and McCourt took the cattle from Toby to Whittata while Brian drove the truck with swags, food etc., to Whittata. When the cattle arrived at Bookaloo they were put onto the railway vans. Walty was at the cattle sale at Stirling North where 110 cattle were sold at an average of £26/6/9d.

1957

January – Colin, Tom, Ray and McCourt collected the sheep around South Eliza and brought home the rams to North Gap. They went out again a few days later to collect the cattle at Treasure dam and branded 25 bull calves.

February – J Cobbin went down around Mt Gunson waters and found some of the sheep had perished at the bottom tank, so he collected the dead wool from them.

May – Walty, Ken, Hans and Ray went to the scrub to cut myall fence posts from around Toby swamp. Colin, Tom and McCourt were rigging up a crutching plant at Mt Gunson. It took a week for them to crutch the sheep so they camped there while doing it.

August – The shearing team turned up including the expert and the cook. Fred Digance carted 28 bales of wool to Port Augusta that mostly came from the crutching. Walter, who was now living in Port Augusta, came up to Pernatty with H

Holmes to observe the shearing. C Moore came with a semi-trailer and took a load of 63 bales of wool to Port Augusta

October – Walter and Walty went to the Stirling North cattle sales. Tom and Bruce took the goods to Mt Gunson and Yeltacowie, and pulled some bogged cattle out of Camel Dam. Walty and Colin went to Adelaide with Dalgety to see the wool sold, with the top price of 88 pence per pound.

1958

February – The men mustered the sheep from the north side of South Woodforde and took them to South Eliza, camping there, and taking 1,855 wethers to Hogan's Catch. Tom and Dave went to Mt Gunson and collected 173 sheep from Oakden Hills Station and put them back into Middle paddock.

March – Walter, H Holmes and J Whitehorn came up to see South Gap shearing , then came into Pernatty, and had a look around the Avenue and saw a few cattle. N Quire from Morton's Adelaide gave a demonstration with a mobile saw down in the scrub behind Red Lake. He went back to Adelaide next day but Walty and Colin tried it out on the strainers at Red Lake.

May – Colin, Tom, Bruce, Dave, Ray and Bob took timber and plant from South Eliza and started to build a crutching shed at the Woodforde. Walty took H Holmes, J Surman and Bonifant down around Old Pernatty, Yeltacowie, and up around the Woodforde for a look around. Mr Holmes and party then left to view the South gap shearing.

June – Walty, Colin, Tom, Bruce and Bob went over to toby Swamp to put up posts for the stockyard, and pipe rails for the race for putting cattle on transports. Walty and Colin then made gates for the cattle yards and race. M Finlay and Tony Edwards from Dalgety came up to have a look at the cattle, along with Eric and

Bob Greenfield from South Gap Station. V O Whiting came to Toby swamp on the 28th, and took 25 cattle to Stirling North. It was the first load of cattle to go from Pernatty by motor transport, with Bill Whiting as the driver. Mildred, Graham, Miss Hennessey, Mrs Parkinson and Glenice came to toby to see the cattle being loaded. Earlier the cattle tried to break out of the yard. Another 52 cattle went on two transports the next day. Walty and Graham then went to Port Augusta, and out to Stirling North for the cattle sale, being the best held for many months. There were record cattle prices not seen for many years as well, going for £76/5/- per head.

August – Shearing began with the shorn sheep being dipped afterwards. Walter came up to see the shearing as did Tony Edwards of Dalgety, A Watt from Crystal Brook, and Mr John, who bought 11/2 and 21/2 year old ewes for 59/- and 53/- respectively. The shearing was completed on the 10th September with 12,509 sheep shorn giving 449 bales of wool to go to the sales. The shearers left for Bungarie.

October – Messrs Holmes and Surman arrived from Port Augusta and bought 600 aged ewes for Parakylia Station, 450 at 45/-, 150 at 42/6, to be delivered at the Elizabeth Hut on Arcoona from Yeltacowie. Next day, Colin and Ray took the ewes from Yeltacowie to Bottle Hill, while Bruce took the swags and cooking gear to Bottle Hill where they camped for the night. The sheep were delivered next day and the men returned to Pernatty homestead.

1959

January – Walter, H Holmes, Jack Fullerton and Ned Holtham came up to inspect the cattle and sheep. Walty took the buyers out to the Woolshed to inspect the wethers, selling 652 at 53/- at the shed then they went out to Toby Swamp. Here 21 bullocks and steers were sold at £50 each, with nine heifers and one steer for

£250. Whiting's Transport then trucked 20 bullocks while Jack Fullerton trucked 10 cattle, all to Port Augusta. Whiting's brought another four transports to cart the

April – The men were crutching throughout the month at the Woodforde, South Eliza, Yeltacowie, and then back to South Eliza to crutch the Sells sheep.

August – The shearing started but the cook walked out. Another cook arrived for the shearers from Adelaide but eight days later the shearers sacked him. Messrs Whitehorn and Buckan, from Dalgety, came to watch the shearing. Shearing finished on the 11th September with 11,000 sheep shorn, and the shearers left for Port Augusta.

1960

February – Walty collected the sheep from Pernatty Well to get ready for the buyers and took Messrs Holmes and Fullerton to Bonney Bluff to look at the cattle, then to Toby Swamp to see the wethers. Mr Holmes also brought Bill Maitland and M Conrick to inspect the ewes and bought them at 32/6d per head. Jack Fullerton bought nine cattle at £44/10/-, and wethers at Toby at 50/-. He took the cattle away in his own truck.

August – Shearing began but after a couple of days had to stop due to rain and wet sheep. It finished completely three weeks later.

1961

February – Graham, Dave and Cliff went up to South Woodforde to collect the sheep and yarded them at the Woodforde. Walty took the truck with the swags and gear to the Woodforde and got the meals ready. They wigged the sheep due to wool blindness then afterwards, took them to South Eliza on the way to Hogans Catch. The men went to other areas to wig the sheep and put the weak lambs in the truck to take to South Eliza.

May – Walty went to the wool sales at Adelaide, while on Pernatty the men crutched 15 new Collinsville rams and six Glen Holmes rams, as well as tailing 88 lambs at the Woolshed. Walty and Graham went out to Jack Fullerton's place to have a look at a young, part-Arab stallion.

July – Mr Holmes came up to see the start of shearing and stayed the night. Sid McDowell came and got the first load of 60 bales of wool, and took them to Port Pirie. Into August, and another 60 bales trucked to Port Pirie on the 3rd, on the 10th 60 bales, and further loads when shearing finished on the 17th August.

September – The men mustered the sheep and shifted them from South Woodforde to Acacia tank, South Eliza to Camel Dam, and from the Woolly paddock to Toby Swamp. One of the men came back to Pernatty, went to the storeroom and took out the metho and got drunk on it. He finished up and left to go back to Port Augusta.

October – Further mustering and crutching of sheep as the maggots were very bad, from the Stranded paddock to the Racecourse, then onto YMG, and some from the Racecourse to the Concrete bank and then onto anniversary Dam. Walty and Colin signed papers as joint owners of Pernatty Station, after the deaths of Walter (1960) and Agnes (1961).

Chapter Five

The Aboriginal People of Pernatty

After spending 200,000 years living in Africa people began moving out of the land and colonizing other areas, venturing over the land bridges of the continents. The sea was much lower 70,000 years due to the Ice Age, enabling various groups to make their way to what is now Europe 45,000 years ago, while others took to Siberia 35,000 years ago, South Asia 70,000 years, China 50,000 years, Japan 30,000 years, and eventually others went over the Beringia land bridge to Alaska 16,000 years ago. Some of them went even further into what is now the United States of America, called Clovis sites that have been dated at 13,500 years old, while before then groups ventured into South America 14,500 years ago. The group of people who had gone to South Asia also ventured down the Sunda land bridge (Malaysia and Indonesia) making their way to Australia across the sea 50,000 years ago. At this time New Guinea, Australia with the island called Tasmania, were all one continent. These people were the Australian Aborigines.⁹⁴

As well as being inhabited for this amount of time, with the first recorded inhabitation being at Lake Mungo in New South Wales, Australia had over 250 languages. Eventually different tribal clans extended into the Victorian area 31,000 years ago, and by 20,000 years ago, Aboriginal families had extended throughout the continent having walked from New Guinea down to the bottom of Tasmania. With the appearance of grasslands 18,000 years ago, the Aboriginal people could gather the seeds for food and to use as a trade with other clans. This also provided them with social activities such as corroborees and marriages. With the melting of the ice about 13,000 years ago, sea levels increased thus cutting Tasmania off from the mainland leaving its people isolated. Within the past

⁹⁴ Haywood, J, *The New Atlas of World History – Global Events at a Glance* (London, 2011) pp 14-15.

10,000 years, the rising seas cut off New Guinea from the Australian continent, and the shape of the continent was defined. Therefore, throughout these years Australia had gone from a green wet climate, through the ice age, then to the brown dry climate experienced today, and the Aboriginal people adapted to the climate and the environment of the country. There was no need for fences or enclosures as they roamed in their specific areas, hunting and gathering food, making clothing when needed along with tools and weapons to use. They were at one with the country, knowing its 'moods', when and where to gather foods for the lean times and where the waterholes were when drought came.⁹⁵ From 1500AD onwards, they witnessed the comings and goings of ships that passed, or watched crews land on the shores of the country searching for water and/or food, and then leave. When the Europeans landed in 1788 at Botany Bay and stayed, the country changed drastically, and the Aboriginal people were forced to change their way of life.

Before colonization, Aboriginal people's idea of work differed from the European concept of work. Australian Aboriginal people were hunter gatherers who shared what they had killed or collected within the family group. It was unknown to work for individual gain, and there was no notion of money. Aboriginal people lost control of their lands and as a consequence slowly became dependent upon the colonists for food and employment. Towns and rural properties grew over time to cater for the influx of people who came to the new country, either as convicts or free people who wanted to start a new life. As the houses and fences went up the Aboriginal people found they no longer had free access to the land and water they had once traversed without physical boundaries, and in the late 1790s and early 1800s, clashes with the Aborigines occurred, certainly in New South Wales,

⁹⁵ Geoffrey Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia* (Melbourne, 1982), p. v-vi.

Victoria and Tasmania, killing many.⁹⁶ Aboriginal people, because their land had been taken from them, had few choices: they could depend on handouts from government or settlers; they could steal or kill livestock or they could work for white settlers who regarded Aboriginal people as a threat because of earlier clashes.

In the eastern states, the small European population was mainly an agricultural one and the Aboriginal population could still survive by hunting and gathering. When, however, the sheep and cattle industry began to develop, the Aboriginal peoples' problems worsened. They had been dispossessed of their land and so were prevented from hunting or following traditional migration patterns. Even worse was the discovery of gold in 1851, which was to have a massive impact on the Aboriginal people of south-east Australia. The white population increased from 400,000 in 1856 to 1,150,000 in 1861, which led to increased pressure for pastoral and agricultural land.⁹⁷ Many white settlers went to try their luck on the goldfields which led to a shortage of labour. The only other source of labour was the Aboriginal people, and they became crucial to the pastoral industry. Indeed, in areas of Victoria and New South Wales 'Aboriginal labour replaced white labour'.⁹⁸ However, as the 'gold fever' subsided, more white labour was available and the dependence on Aboriginal labour in the eastern states ended.

The State of South Australia was founded in 1836, and during this year, 'nine vessels brought a total of five hundred and forty-six British settlers to the new province' establishing areas of settlements along the Torrens River and over the Adelaide Plains, while relations with the Aborigines were generally peaceful.⁹⁹ In 1839 the South Australian government had appointed a Protector of Aborigines

⁹⁶ 'As a Matter of Fact', ATSIC, 2nd Edition (Canberra, 1999), pp. 8-9.

⁹⁷ R Castle and J Hagan 'Settlers and the State: the creation of an Aboriginal workforce in Australia', in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 22, 1998, p.29.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Cameron Raynes, 'A Little Flour and a Few Blankets'- *An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834-2000* (Gepps Cross, 2002), p. 7.

whose remit was to befriend the natives, be acquainted with their 'language and dialects, their customs, their habits...and with all other particulars concerning them which may be of importance'. Another proviso in the remit was to 'endeavour to bring them to the knowledge of GOD, and of the fundamental truths of CHRISTIANITY'.¹⁰⁰ Generally, as the white population grew, [by 1840 14,600] most of the Aboriginal people did get schooling and work,¹⁰¹ especially in the rural areas, and in the pastoral regions.

The pastoral regions of the state increased with the opening up of the south-east and north-east areas to sheep and dairy and beef cattle, and Eyre Peninsula which was also settled for cereal cropping and sheep farming. By 1860 the north-west and far north of the state was to be claimed by potential pastoralists, and Aboriginal people became a significant source of labour. Robert Foster noted in 2000 that 'Aboriginal labour grew steadily more important until, by the 1890s, most observers agreed that it had become essential.'¹⁰² Certainly the land in this area was only suitable for sheep and beef cattle use. It was also an area where the Aboriginal nomads lived, and as improvements were made to the land with homesteads and fences going up the traditional way of life was more difficult to continue. As new districts were opened up for settlement the government began to issue rations. These issues were to gain 'some control over the local Aboriginal population' and 'assisted pastoralists in securing and managing a source of labour that was cheap and skilled.'¹⁰³ At various areas of the state were depots where Aboriginal people 'in want' could get daily rations of '1lb flour, 2 ozs sugar, and 1/2oz tea, and the usual medical comforts' when required. These rations would be given to the 'sick, aged, infirm, and to orphan children, and women with infants

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* P.10.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* P.12.

¹⁰² Robert Foster, 'Rations, coexistence, and the colonization of Aboriginal labour in the SA Pastoral Industry, 1860-1911, *Aboriginal History*, 2000. Vol.24 p.2.

¹⁰³ Foster, 'Rations etc', p.2

under twelve months old'.¹⁰⁴ The main depot for the north-west was at Port Augusta. Port Augusta when founded was then, as now, a crossroads of Australia, and the area had long been used as a meeting place for local Aboriginal groups and the area contained ceremonial sites.¹⁰⁵ The Nukunu people were the original inhabitants of the area and studies suggest that by the time Port Augusta was established, Aboriginal people had been in the region for 10,000 years.¹⁰⁶ Port Augusta, or the area that it was built upon, was on an Aboriginal trade route between northern and south-eastern Australia and westward past Ceduna, Eucla, into Western Australia. However, it is the north-south-east trade route for red ochre, which concerns us, and the Aboriginal Group Kokatha, whose territory includes Pernatty.

Aboriginal People on Pernatty

Aboriginal people on Greenfield properties were treated quite well although paternalistically. It was under the Port Augusta depot that William Greenfield, owner of South Gap Station, was registered as an Issuer of Rations to the nomadic Kokatha tribe who camped on his land. William and his brother, George, had been involved in the north-west area since 1880, and between them had bought South Gap, Andamooka, Purple Downs, Roxby Downs, Whittita and Pernatty Stations by 1909. These properties crossed Kokatha and Kuyani Aboriginal lands. The Kokatha tribe would visit South Gap,¹⁰⁷ especially after rains, to access the waterholes, while another group hunted and stayed

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* P.18.

¹⁰⁵ R J Anderson, *Solid Town: The history of Port Augusta* (Adelaide, 1988), p.3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Between 1899 and 1926 the Aboriginal people mentioned in the diaries (many without surnames) at South Gap Station were – Alick (dogger/hunter), Wild Mary, Annie, Eva & Winnie (earned 7s. 6d per week as shepherds at shearing), Charley (dogger/hunter), Fat Tommy (dogger), George (rabbiter), Ginger (dogger/hunter), Lucy & Tottie (rabbiter), Mt Eba Billy (rabbit catcher), Nellie (rabbiter), Old George (dogger), Yadnaperma Tommy (rabbiter), Archie (rabbiter), Harry Dare (vermin rider), J Kite (horse boy), Punch (shepherd) & Billy Winfield (shepherd).

occasionally on Purple Downs Station. Neither group would meet as both were reluctant to find work on the other station.

William requested that the tribe wear western clothing while working, and by 1905 about 15 to 20 men and women members of the tribe had regular work on South Gap, trapping rabbits and skinning them, looking after and riding the horses and caring for the sheep, and had various jobs at shearing time. Water was carted out to their camp when needed and William ensured that they had a good wage and were treated very well at the station store.¹⁰⁸ Some of the Aboriginal women worked on the outstations and helped the families who lived on them, and were useful in health issues particularly in childbirth. In 1925, one of the white women, Mrs. Riggs, gave birth to a daughter on the Pernatty Well outstation. It was a premature birth and the child was not considered to be alive, so was put in a corner for burial later. However, one of the Aboriginal women (Katty Kite) was acting as midwife and had instructed Mrs. Riggs to squat like the Aboriginal women did for the delivery. However, Katty noticed the baby slightly breathing and rubbed olive oil over her. Katty also suggested to Mrs. Riggs not to wash the baby but continue to clean her with the oil for two months; the baby lived until she was 80 years old.¹⁰⁹ Many of the white women took advice from, and noticed what the Aboriginal women did, certainly with pregnancies and sickness.

William Greenfield noted that some of the Aboriginal people were not reliable time-keepers, they had had no reason previously to keep to a timetable, and so he ensured that none had to meet trains for workers or goods, or had jobs with a deadline to it. Many of the workers still did their return to native life, sometimes disappearing for months but were always welcomed back to the station when they returned. He managed to work on their 'fear' of going to the other properties

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Pp.124-125.

¹⁰⁹ This story was related by two people; Lorna Meigel, sister of the baby, and Adele Pring of SASOSE Council (2006).

where other tribal groups were situated and in due time some of the workers, such as Dick Roe, George Turner and Fred Archer, to name a few, would gradually get involved in the Greenfield's properties, moving sheep and/or goods between them.¹¹⁰ In the book *Two Good Men*, there was mention of a Corroborree in 1922 at Roxby Downs. There were, wrote A J Greenfield, 'never more than twenty [Aboriginal people] at South Gap and a dozen at the Purple [Downs], [yet] the word went out over the almost magical grapevine for a huge gathering'. Aboriginal people gathered from Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Oodnadatta and the Flinders Ranges, and a 'truce must have been in place over factional fighting, and four or five hundred [Aboriginal people] camped at Roxby for a week or two'.¹¹¹

Tension did build up between some of the tribe and the Aboriginal workers on South Gap Station. Billy Kite, an Aboriginal person, was well educated, 'much better than many white men having been reared from an early age by the Kite family in Quorn.' Billy was from the Aranda tribe from the Alice Springs area. While he was at school in Quorn, a Catholic priest took an interest in him, and after he had left the school the same Priest sent him reading matter and notes. Greek mythology was one of Billy's pet subjects – he had a very retentive memory and didn't drink. George Calvert, who also worked for Arcoona and was reputed to have been an Oxford Graduate, had good discussions on the subject. Billy had worked for many years on various pastoral properties throughout the Northern Territory and South Australia, such as Stuart Creek, Millers Creek and Arcoona Stations before working at South Gap. William Greenfield stated in a letter to the authorities:

¹¹⁰ Greenfield, *Two Good Men*, p, 124.

¹¹¹ A J Greenfield, *Two Good Men: The Greenfield Brothers – Northern Pioneers of South Australia 1836-1926* (Mount Gambier, 2003), p.126.



Aboriginal men in western clothing getting ready for a Corroborree 1922. (Source R G Greenfield).

He came to us just three years ago and has been working here without a break ever since. He has nothing to do with the blacks down this way and has never really associated with any of them. He believes he is legally married to Susie Kite and they have five children...

Among the local tribe here are 4 or 5 half caste men who are real wasters and will never work but sponge on the men who do. Until recently Willie Kite the eldest son of Billy was working here but these half caste men got hold of him and enticed him away from his father. When they got him well away from here he was seized and is now being held by some of them awaiting the assembly of the tribe when he is to be operated on (made a "man" as they call it). Billy Kite is furious about it and now appeals to you to punish these fellows or take such other action as you think fit to protect his sons from interference by tribes who have no right whatever to touch them.

*My personal opinion is that this is being done out of pure spite by the loafers because they know that Billy is held in such high esteem by the whites and he has nothing to do with them. With the exception of about half a dozen of these half castes loafing blighters the blacks here are a decent contented lot and don't give the slightest trouble but it would be a good thing for everyone concerned if it were possible to bring them to their senses.*¹¹²

It is unknown what the response was to this plea but Willie slept with a rifle near at hand however, William cautioned restraint so that no injuries occurred.¹¹³ This demonstrates the paternalism William felt and it also constitutes evidence that Aboriginal men and women who acted and dressed like white settlers were preferred. Marriages, or co-habitation, between people from other tribes and the white men from the station, and stations in general, occurred. One of the tribal women, Wild Mary, had three children, one of whom, Eva, married a Wirangu man thirty years her senior, and well thought of by those who had him in their employ. 'Harry Dare had lived and worked at stations including Yardea, Moonaree, Kolendo, Yudnapinna, South Gap, Whittita, Nonning and Carriewerloo and later at stations closer to Whyalla – Middleback and Roopena'.¹¹⁴ Another tribal woman, Totti, married one of the white stockmen which, after several years, ended in divorce because he went away and left her behind.

The Aboriginal people throughout Australia were susceptible to the sicknesses that the Europeans suffered. Having lived an insular life on an island continent and never exposed to western diseases, their immune systems could not fight many of the diseases they caught. However, both the Aboriginal people and the white people suffered from the Spanish flu epidemic at South Gap in 1919,

¹¹² Letter to Protector of Aborigines and Port Augusta Police, 1921.

¹¹³ Greenfield, *Two Good Men*, p. 125.

¹¹⁴ Cissy Sultan & Kathy Bradley, *Cissy's Story* (Canberra, 2004), p.3.

causing the death of William Greenfield's 'Aboriginal friend, 'King' Tommy Yunda and his woman Minnie... Shearing was held up because so many were sick, and the healthy were kept busy caring for the bed ridden'. The typhoid outbreak of 1922 lingered for many months causing the death of Mrs. Maria Parkinson, one of the longstanding white workers at South Gap. The Aboriginal people lost a number to the typhoid fever and often hung their dead in the trees to let their spirits go free. But the Health Inspector wanted the Port Augusta police to make sure the bodies were buried to smother the fever. This caused the departure of the Aboriginal people who did not go back to South Gap, as they considered the place had 'bad spirits', however, in 1928 they arrived at Pernatty Station.

The visits to Pernatty from 1928 were spasmodic which suggests that various members of the Aboriginal group were getting employment on stations or dispersing to towns such as Port Augusta, Whyalla, Oodnadatta and so forth. In March 1928 Walter got his son Laurie to take the group to Toby Swamp (8 miles or 13 kilometres from the homestead) to camp, where there was water. How long they stayed there is not stated in the diary, but they were not heard from again until the end of December 1930 when Dick Rowe and Les Egan came along, 'the first for some time.' For the following days there were various visits into Pernatty, firstly by three Aboriginal women and one man to get rations to take to their camp at Toby Swamp. Then several days later 'four Aboriginal women came along from their camp,' whether this was for more rations or to enquire about employment is not mentioned. The Aboriginal group did go through Pernatty again but is not mentioned until 1947 with George Turner as head, having a rest at Hard Struggle, (not far from Toby Swamp). The final time that the group



Wild Mary. Her Aboriginal name was Bubada. (1908).

goes through Pernatty was in 1950 when 'The mob of Darkies left again on their way back to Port Augusta, about eight of them. Monty Austin appeared to be in charge of them.'¹¹⁵ While Walter and Agnes French were at Pernatty they employed many Aboriginal people both as domestic workers or station hands,

Many Aboriginal people also passed through Pernatty on their way through to other stations. One such person was Yudnapinna Billy, who arrived at Pernatty in January 1928, with his wife Lucy, on horseback. His occupation was tracking and killing dingoes. In 1912 the South Australian Government built the Vermin fence from the West Coast to Cameron's Corner near the New South Wales /Queensland border. It was to keep the dingoes out of the sheep growing pastoral districts to the south of the fence, and into the cattle growing areas of the north of the state; however, dingoes jumped the fence or found breakages in it to get through. Camping at Toby Swamp, Yudnapinna Billy would go to Pernatty Well to track any dingo that had been distressing the sheep, or into the big Acacia paddock, out to South Eliza or the Woodforde outstations to track them.¹¹⁶ The ledger shows that Pernatty employed him for many months, and during this time he also got many rabbit skins which gave both him and Lucy extra income. Each month they would get goods from Pernatty's storeroom, which Walter or his bookkeeper, Mr. Munro, entered into the account books. Any dingo scalps obtained brought a 7 shillings and 6 pence bounty under the *Wild Dog Act* 1912, and the scalps were noted by Walter who advised the Police at Port Augusta. By August 6th 1928, Yudnapinna Billy and Lucy left Pernatty with a cheque for £6 after the storeroom goods had been deducted.¹¹⁷ Another regular was Billy Kite, who has previously been mentioned.

¹¹⁵ *Diaries*, 14th January 1950.

¹¹⁶ *Diaries*, from 23rd January to 6th August 1928.

¹¹⁷ *Pernatty Ledger*, 6th August 1928.

Between 1931 and 1936, Billy Kite and his sons, Willie, Bert and Gebbie, would stay at Toby Swamp on their way between South Gap and Roxby Downs Stations, often on runs for the stations. In November 1931 Walter French mentions that Billy and Willie were passing through 'enroute to South Gap with packhorse'¹¹⁸. Ten days later both men went back through Pernatty on the way to Roxby Downs Station, apparently taking horses with them. Billy was to bring Pernatty's black colt with him but had forgotten. Walter French had known Billy when he was in charge of South Gap from 1922 to 1927, so there was a comfortable friendship between them, and he did not have a problem with Billy and his sons staying at, or around, the homestead. Both Walter and Billy had a love of horses and on one of his trips from Roxby Downs in 1932; Billy brought two horses, and a colt, from Tom French of Purple Downs Station, for station use at Pernatty. The horses' names were Zane Grey and Fairy Queen and both gave numerous foals that were used for riding and mustering around Pernatty. The colt was used as a trade with Walter and a horse called Mandy was exchanged for it.¹¹⁹ In September the same year after camping at Toby Swamp, Billy and Bert, brought two fillies and a gelding belonging to Tom French to leave at the station for future use by the French family.¹²⁰ Billy's son Gebbie, headed towards Port Augusta, (where his mother lived), and stayed at Toby Swamp while taking a packhorse and four horses with him.¹²¹ The Kite brothers were interested in the breeding and selling of stock horses, with some of the horses used for racing at bush meetings held on various pastoral properties.

By 1935 Billy Kite was employed on Yeltacowie Station as a stockman. The boundary fences between properties can get breakages in them and he had to

¹¹⁸ *Pernatty diaries*, 27th November & 10th December 1931.

¹¹⁹ *Diaries*, 24th to 26th June 1932.

¹²⁰ *Diaries*, 28th September 1932.

¹²¹ *Diaries*, 19th November 1933.

herd some young cattle from Pernatty that had escaped into it. He brought



Billy Kite on the horse, the other person is unknown.

Yeltacowie's branding irons with him to do the job immediately before taking them back to the cattle enclosure at Yeltacowie.¹²² Walter and Agnes French bought Yeltacowie Station in 1936 and Billy and Sandy Rowe became employees of Pernatty. Sandy Rowe had worked on Arcoona Station as well as South Gap. They cared for the sheep at Old Yeltacowie, ensuring that there was feed and water. Both looked out for good quality horses and broke them in.¹²³ However, Sandy left in October for other pursuits with wages of £15.6s.4d, and Billy finally left the Pernatty area in November, perhaps to go back to his wife and the house they both owned, taking his horses with him. Walter French stated in the diary, 'his horses [were] the biggest worry of his life.'¹²⁴ Billy was paid £6.10/- per month,

¹²² *Diaries*, 8th February 1935.

¹²³ *Diaries*, 27th July 1936.

¹²⁴ *Diaries*, 21st November 1936.

and by the time the expenses were taken out, (bought horses, stores and water bag refill) he left with £12.10/-.¹²⁵

Another Aboriginal person from Port Augusta who arrived at Pernatty was Jimmy Young. He put in an appearance at Pernatty in December 1943 and began work for thirty shillings a week. He was placed at Toby Swamp¹²⁶ to look after the sheep and to maintain the windmill. Breakages occurred in the pumping rod of windmills due to the stress placed on the rod bringing the water to the surface. Often the rod would bend out of alignment in the housing and it then meant a journey to the blacksmith's area at the homestead to be straightened. Sometimes when water was low in the dam, the sheep would get bogged getting to the water and needed to be pulled out before dying. Before long Jimmy was placed at the Woodforde, (16 miles or 26 kilometres from the homestead) to look after the 1000 sheep there. In early May 1944 Walter French had taken rations out to him and Jimmy was feeling unwell. By the 10th one of the stockmen went out to the Woodforde to see how he was coping, and as Walter French angrily wrote, 'but could find no trace of him about. Heard from Jack Barber that Jimmy Young passed his camp last Monday on his way to catch the 'Tea and Sugar' train. Cleared out from the Woodforde and left everything to take their chance.'¹²⁷ Even so, Jimmy would be employed spasmodically, to do odd jobs about the homestead area between January and March 1946, instead of the responsibility of looking after sheep.¹²⁸

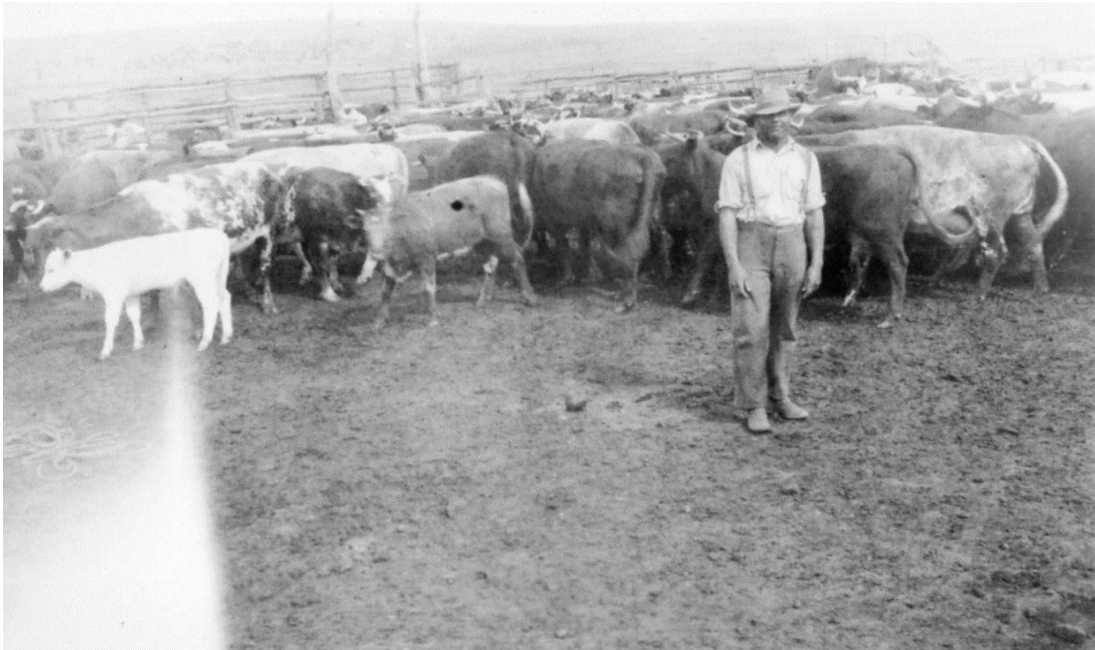
An Aboriginal person who stayed at Pernatty for four years was Albert Ward. He lived with the station hands in the men's hut. He arrived on the mail truck in August 1946. He was a diligent worker and if any of the workers was going to Port Augusta for the weekend he went too. On the 12th May 1947 he was married in

¹²⁵ *Ledger*, November 1936.

¹²⁶ *Diaries*, 28th December 1943.

¹²⁷ *Diaries*, 10th May 1944.

¹²⁸ *Diaries*, 4th January to 29th March 1946.



Albert Ward after mustering cattle.

Port Augusta and had a short honeymoon, coming back to work on the 15th May. Mrs. Ward never came to the station as she was looking after their children, and it became apparent that she was ill. Although Albert visited her as often as he could, he was to go home to Port Augusta, via the fast goods train from Bookaloo on the 7th December 1947, as she became worse. Mrs. Ward died the next day. Albert was back at Pernatty for work by the 11th December.¹²⁹ He spent Christmas at Pernatty but still went to Port Augusta to see his children. However, Albert came back in March 1948 and brought Zena, his girlfriend with him. While he was working as one of the station hands Zena started to work in the homestead kitchen. Next day Zena milked the cows for the first time. Both Albert and Zena had the trust and respect of Walter and Agnes, as shown when the referendum on 'Constitution Alterations (Rent and Prices) 1947', was held on the 29th May 1948. Everyone went to Woocalla to vote, and left Albert and Zena in charge to look after Pernatty.¹³⁰ In 1949 Albert became ill and he was away for

¹²⁹ *Diaries*, 7th to 11th December 1947.

¹³⁰ *Diaries*, 29th May 1948.



Zena Ward with little Christine Merrill.

five months, coming back in January 1950. However, they both ended their work at Pernatty in May 1950, due to the effect of the illness and because he wanted to have his sons back. Previously, in February 1949, the diaries noted that 'Albert had gone to Port Augusta to complete paperwork re his boys'.¹³¹ Both Albert and Zena were housed in the room next to the kitchen in the homestead as were another couple later, Brian and Rita Joslyn.

The Joslyn's arrived at Pernatty in November 1953, Brian as station hand and Rita as cook. Rita was the grand-daughter of Wild Mary, and the daughter of Harry and Eva Dare, who worked at South Gap Station as mentioned above. She

¹³¹ *Diaries*, 14th February 1949.

married her white 'Cowboy' while both worked at Siam Station.¹³² But even though they were married, both were occasionally questioned by the authorities as to their legitimacy. This was due to two Acts of Parliament; The Police Act, No. 15 of 1869-70, 'which made it an offence for a non-Aboriginal person, of no fixed address and lawful means of support, to be found lodging or wandering with Aboriginal people.'¹³³ The second Act that affected the Aboriginal and white people was No. 55 of 1953, Police Offences Act which 'made it an offence for a non-Aboriginal person to habitually consort with an Aboriginal person.'¹³⁴ Although the sections were repealed in 1958, Rita and Brian, and other married couples including Rita's sister, Cissy Sultan and her husband, Guppa, were subjected to questioning about their status up to the 1970s,¹³⁵ in towns where the police did not know them and who believed they were breaching the Police Offences Act.



Rita Joslyn with Graham French

¹³² Cissy Sultan, *Cissy's Story*, p.111.

¹³³ Cameron Raynes, *A Little Flour and a Few Blankets* p.150.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* P.151.

¹³⁵ Cissy Sultan, *Cissy's Story*, p.81.

Rita did not know how to cook but was willing to learn. Agnes often taught the Aboriginal women and girls how to cook. This not only meant following recipes, but also knowing cuts of meat, how to bone meat, and the best cooking methods to use. Cooking on a wood stove in summer had its problems but the men had to be fed.¹³⁶ Agnes was never far from her charges, always on hand to help and to advise them. She was a firm, but fair, woman, who did not tolerate foolishness from either Aboriginal or white workers. The cooking skills that Rita gained from Agnes helped her throughout her marriage and on other properties, as she and Brian travelled over the countryside during their marriage. Rita and Brian left Pernatty in June 1954 when Brian got boils on his arm. However, before that, in March, they, along with Walter and Agnes and the family, went to Whyalla for the weekend to see the Queen and Prince Phillip. Afterwards, Rita and Brian went back to Pernatty by taxi from Whyalla, a journey of 297 kilometres.¹³⁷ The Joslyn's eventually made their home in Iron Knob and Whyalla and were married for forty-five years.¹³⁸ Many Aboriginal workers at Pernatty, male and female, came from the Colebrook Home, at Quorn or Eden Hills.

The Colebrook Home was run by the United Aborigines Mission from 1927-1944. This was to ensure the Aboriginal children of mixed race were not influenced by the 'wrong type of aborigines themselves, as well as Afghans and others'.¹³⁹ The children were given an education, taught about cleanliness and God, and given skills for domestic service for the girls and outdoor work for the boys. When the children reached the age of 14 years they had to get work. Any prospective employer had to fill in a form that the mission produced. The child's wage would

¹³⁶ *Pernatty Diaries*, 15th January 1954.

¹³⁷ *Diaries*, 19th to 21st March 1954.

¹³⁸ Cissy Sultan, *Cissy's Story* p.111.

¹³⁹ A E Gerard, *United Aborigines Mission: an outline of the history of the mission, particularly in South Australia* (Adelaide, 1950), p.28.

be split with a percentage going to the child and the balance forwarded to the Secretary of the mission on a monthly basis, to be banked. The child had to write to the Secretary for additional funds for purchases and/or holidays.¹⁴⁰ It was under these rules that Pernatty employed a number of young Aboriginal people.

In 1946 Mavis Davis came as a maid for the homestead, helping Agnes with the sweeping, washing and hanging the clothes, and other incidentals. Mavis finished up four months later, reason unknown.¹⁴¹ Doug Warrior, half-caste, came out from Quorn with Tom French (one of Walter and Agnes' sons).¹⁴² According to the diaries, it appears that Doug did not settle into station work that well. He took one of the horses along with a saddle and bridle, and absconded. Walter French went after him, tracking him to the boundary fence with South Gap Station. Next day Doug Warrior was found among the Aboriginal group that had camped at Hard Struggle.¹⁴³ It is presumed the horse was returned, but to Doug's whereabouts afterwards, nothing was mentioned. Pansy Wilson, 'a dark girl came from Adelaide and out to the station as house maid at 30 shillings per week.'¹⁴⁴ Pansy stayed at Pernatty for more than a year. If Agnes was going to other parts of the property, such as visiting the families at the outstations, or seeing the wildflowers, dams filled with water, or having a picnic somewhere, Pansy went too. She got the flu and colds, but she was useful for Agnes, whose health was beginning to suffer.¹⁴⁵

During the time Pansy was at Pernatty, a young Aboriginal boy by name of Jackie Domyer came to work as a station hand. The white station hands had cleaned up a room for him in the men's hut however, a few days later Jackie became very

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* P.36.

¹⁴¹ *Pernatty Diaries*, 6th of May 1946

¹⁴² *Diaries*, 25th February 1947.

¹⁴³ *Diaries*, 27th May 1947.

¹⁴⁴ *Diaries*, 2nd August 1950.

¹⁴⁵ *Diaries*, 8th July 1952.

sick, but returned to work after a week.¹⁴⁶ By April he had had enough and left Pernatty and Walter thought he may not be back again. But, he came back a week later on the mail truck and started to work again. Within a month, after breaking in a colt to ride, had a ride on it, as well as an older horse Philip, and fell off. He then had a fit. On the 9th May 1950, having left on the mail truck, Walter wrote of Jackie sympathetically, 'paid off and finished with. Poor unfortunate [was] not exactly all there'.¹⁴⁷ It seems that perhaps Jackie had a few health problems but he did the best he could. Pastoral work is hard and does not suit everyone but Jackie might have gained different employment elsewhere.

In June 1953 Agnes received a letter from the Aborigines Department advising that,

In regard to Aileen her mother now does not wish her to go so far away from home. Ruth went to Mildura and has not returned. Lena Mack, aged 17, brought up in Colebrook Home would go to you. She has been at Kolendo [Station] with Mrs. Brennan and there received 45 shillings a week. They think she is now worth 50 shillings per week – 10 shillings a week to be given her and £8 a month sent to United Aborigines Mission, 66 Pirie St, Adelaide. When she requires clothing she can write them. She will be sent to Bookaloo next Thursday June, 25th. We presume that is the [Railway] Station at which she will be met.¹⁴⁸

Lena arrived at Pernatty on the 29th June, late at night, having got a lift with Aleck Todd, the damsinker. Lena did the work that Pansy did as housemaid, as well as being a helpmate to Agnes. Again Lena was like one of the family, going places with them, and if the weekend had a tennis match going she would

¹⁴⁶ *Diaries*, 22nd February 1950.

¹⁴⁷ *Diaries*, 9th May 1950.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from the Welfare Officer, Aborigines Protection Board, Adelaide, to Agnes French, 17th June 1953.

join in. Because of Agnes' illness, she occasionally went into hospital, and must have forgotten to send the cheque for monies to the Mission as a letter arrived from the General Secretary of the United Aborigines Mission in August 1953. It stated,

I am writing to you concerning conditions under which Lena Mack was sent to you from us through Sister McKenzie of the Aborigines Department.

Sister McKenzie gave us to understand that she stated very clearly to you the conditions under which Lena was sent namely that she was to receive in cash from you each week 10 shillings and the other amount was to be sent to this office each month by cheque to be paid into Lena's trust account, but as yet I have not received any payments at all and I am wondering what the reason may be. Lena is sending to me to buy some clothing which she says she needs, and of course that is our wish to assist such girls, but her account will not stand such payments until I receive your cheque, so I would be glad to hear from you on this matter, and if possible I would appreciate her cheque to cover the time she has been with you. I feel perhaps there may have been some misunderstanding on this matter, hence this letter.

I trust that Lena is giving you satisfaction and that I will hear from you soon.¹⁴⁹

The cheques were sent to the United Aborigines Mission for Lena's trust account for the duration of her stay. Lena ended work at Pernatty in October 1954 and she was the last Aboriginal person to be employed at Pernatty¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from the General Secretary, United Aborigines Mission, Adelaide, 24th September 1953.

At this time, Walter and Agnes were suffering health problems and they retired to Port Augusta, leaving Walty to take over the running of Pernatty. Walty was not as comfortable working with Aboriginal people as Walter had been and that, but more likely with increasing financial constraints, was the reason no Aboriginal people worked on Pernatty in later years.

It is likely that without Aboriginal labour Pernatty, and many other stations would have had difficulty getting the work which needed to be done accomplished, and would have struggled to stay financially sound. On many stations Aboriginal labour was paid far less than white workers were. However, Pernatty archives show that Aboriginal employees on Pernatty received the same wages as white workers. In addition, Walter and Agnes French treated their workers, whether Aboriginal or European, fairly. It must also be borne in mind that the extreme isolation of an outback station was borne better by Aboriginal people then, than by Europeans.

I am including here a presentation I did at a History seminar at the University of Adelaide in 2009.

Presentation

When I was a little girl, I was fascinated by a photo which hung in the storeroom at Pernatty Station where I grew up. The photo was of an Aboriginal woman who, I was led to believe, was named Tutti. When I began researching for my thesis I went to Pernatty to convince my father to letting me have the photo but to no avail. However, I was allowed to photograph the photo. My father told me she was not Tutti, but 'Mad Mary', and the photograph was from the late 1890s.

¹⁵⁰ *Pernatty Diaries*, 21st October 1954.

Late in 2006 I discovered a book in the Barr Smith Library called 'Cissy's Story', and contacted the authors and arranged a meeting with them at Whyalla. This meeting took place in January and I met with Cissy Sultan, aged 80, her sister Rita Joslyn, aged 78, and Cissy's co-author, Kathy Bradley. Cissy and Rita are Kokatha elders who worked at South Gap and Pernatty, and they gave me large amounts of useful information of station practices and politics, and told me about their lives. It was just chance that I had the photo of 'Mad Mary' in my folder among family photographs. Both Cissy and Rita, when they saw the photo said it was their grandmother who had been known as 'Wild Mary' or Mary Wingfield. Cissy showed me a photo of herself as a girl and the similarities were marked. They then gave me Mary's story.

Cissy was told that Mary, whose tribal name was Bubada, came from the Musgrave Ranges and was Pitjanjtatara. She did not know why Bubada and her family travelled so far from their homeland. Some of the Aboriginal people from South Gap Station appear to have originated from much farther north, gradually moving south and to the west, particularly as the railway opened the state. Aboriginal people of different tribal backgrounds often worked together at the stations and in later years of white settlement people from different tribal groups were pushed together through circumstances and many subsequently married.

Mary Wingfield had three children Bill, Eva (Cissy & Rita's mother), and Winnie, and they moved around the stations near Lake Torrens and settled for quite a long time at South Gap Station (Pernatty's parent station). There is mention of 'Wild Mary' in South Gap Station records for 1908 living with her three children in the Aboriginal camp. Mary had Kangaroo dogs for hunting but one got caught in a dingo trap and William Greenfield (owner of South Gap) shot it. As Mary loved her dogs William kept the peace by telling her that the dog had picked up a bait and went away to die.

Mary was one of the Aboriginal people who escaped the deadly typhoid outbreak at South Gap in 1922. The Aboriginal people dispersed to other places and it is possible that Mary went to Andamooka to live for awhile, although the Aboriginal group did go to Pernatty from 1928 until 1950. Mary lived occasionally with her son Bill, his wife Mary and two children, and in 1937 they made their home at the Whyalla lookout along with other Aboriginal people. Before Mary's death in 1938, she became ill. Cissy said that 'Grandma Bubada didn't get up, just lay in bed. She got worse and they rang for the police and they took her to Port Augusta and she never came back'. As Cissy was born in 1927, and Rita in 1929, they remembered their 'Grandma Bubada' well.

Mary's daughter Eva met Harry Dare at South Gap Station when he went there to work from Nonning Station. She was thirteen and Harry many years her senior. They were to have twelve children with four dying in infancy. Cissy and Rita lost a brother and two sisters to the Stolen Generation in 1915, and did not find their records until they were in their mid-seventies. Their parents had been reluctant to speak of them.

Although Cissy and Rita were born in Port Augusta, they grew up in Iron Knob, near Whyalla, but because the Iron Knob School would not admit Aboriginal children their parents moved to Whyalla where they could go to school. With the war, Whyalla became an industrial town and someone in authority decided that the Aboriginal families living in Whyalla had to go, and authorized the removal of adults and children to Iron Knob. The Aboriginal people took down their humpies and tents, and with their beds, mattresses, cooking utensils etc, and all were placed onto the BHP train to Iron Knob. Whyalla school rolls show, in 1939, all the Aboriginal children had 'Transferred to Iron Knob'. The Dare family would all move to Middleback Station to join Harry who worked there, to live where Andrew Nicholson had built them a house. This was their very first house with a kitchen,

dining room, two bedrooms and a wood stove, a comfortable haven after living in tents or tin sheds. It was from Middleback Station that Cissy and Rita would begin their working and married lives.

Cissy went to work on Siam Station in 1944 then onto Purple Downs Station, a Greenfield property. She was a very shy girl and got embarrassed by the teasing and jokes the workmen came out with but eventually got used to them and began to stand up for herself. She also worked in the Northern Hotel in Port Augusta, and remembered her father telling her not to pick up money that was on the floor. He warned that people try to test her and she would be blamed for dishonesty. This did happen and Cissy gave her notice and left. Back at Siam Station Cissy married Ron Carter, a station hand, in 1948, and had three children in three years. She became a single mother for many years after her husband left her, and went to live in Iron Knob, working at various jobs and getting the child endowment. Sometimes her parents were able to help her financially. She hated to ask welfare for anything and did not go to them very often. Then she met Guppa Sultan, a widower with eight children, who became her long term partner. He was the son of Sultan Raz Mohammed, a wealthy and prestigious camel owner, who was an important camel breeder and trader in Marree. They worked in mining camps and the Highways Department of South Australia, and undertook fencing, well sinking and station work across, New South Wales and South Australia, and Alice Springs where Cissy worked in the hospital's laundry. They also spent about fifteen years living in Broken Hill. Guppa died in 1990.

Rita found work at Corunna Station, near Iron Knob, and enjoyed the area, saying that 'it was a beautiful place with a good water supply, with dams set back in the hills, and a waterfall with clear water'. She then went to Stirling North to help look after a family. She enjoyed the work and was accepted as one of the family. While working at Siam Station, Rita married Brian Joslyn 'The Cowboy', also a station

hand, in 1953 in Iron Knob's Presbyterian Church. Both Rita and Brian went to work at Pernatty Station as cook and station hand in the same year. Rita's cooking was minimal so Agnes French taught her how to cook, the different cuts of meat of mutton and, when they had it, beef to use, and how to vary the meals. Mutton was the staple meat but it was surprising how many different dishes could be made from it. Brian would be out with the men crutching and mustering the sheep, fixing windmills and any other work as ordered by Walter French. The couple was housed in the room off the kitchen in the homestead. The biggest thing Rita remembered of their stay at Pernatty was the visit to Whyalla by the Queen and Prince Phillip. When we spoke on the phone before we met, she still got excited about it. From Pernatty, Colin French and his mother Mildred, the governess Ina Morton and her daughter Beth, the Aboriginal maid Lena Mack, and Brian and Rita, went for the weekend to see the Royal family. There were traditional Aboriginal dancers who performed a special ceremony to acknowledge the Queen. People came from all over the Outback for the special occasion. Colin and the others stayed for the day, leaving Brian and Rita in Whyalla to catch up with friends and relatives. On the Monday the Joslyn's arrived back at Pernatty Station by taxi, a 297 kilometre round trip for the taxi driver.

While Rita spoke to me on the phone she wanted to know if I was the teacher. I thought she meant Mum (Ina) but she was thinking about Agnes French. She said she had a photo of her and a boy. That flummoxed me until I saw it. She was with Colin's eight year old brother Graham, who is now the owner of Corunna Station.

Brian got a job as a powder monkey at the BHP mine at Iron Knob in the 1960s and eventually moved to Whyalla to live. They would be married for forty-five years when Brian died in 1997, and raised nine children. The marriage had its difficulties but Rita has a sense of humour which belies her distant manner, and she is the strength of her family.

Both Cissy and Rita remember the difficult times and bad treatment the Aboriginal people had to put up with in the 1960s, especially when with Guppa and Brian. They were harassed and watched for being together, even after the consorting laws had changed in 1958. They both said that if a white man and an Aboriginal woman were together, people were suspicious, even if they were married. It was harder for Cissy and Guppa as they were not married and often they had to hide from the authorities.

Both Cissy and Rita are active members in their community and in the Whyalla Reconciliation Group where they met Kathy Bradley, who co-authored the book. Cissy is known for her cooking, catering and cake decorating skills. She is a member of Buttlingarra Women's Craft group and a member of the Northern Carer's Group.



Rita Joslyn & Cissy Sultan – Bubada's grand daughters

Epilogue

Walty and Colin continued together until Walty's death in July 1999. Walty had lived on South Gap in his younger years, and then Pernatty from 1927. He rarely left Pernatty for a long amount of time, and worked on the property until cancer got the better of him in 1999. Walty was a water diviner however, I do not know how often he did it or what his success rate was.

One of the contractors used by Pernatty, Ted Evans, who used to do dam building for Walty at Yeltacowie, told me that, the weather had been 106 degrees F for awhile when Walty came out from Pernatty to see how the dam was going. He advised Ted that it would be a good idea to block the end of the dam as it would rain in eight to ten days and it would be about 5 1/2 inches (137.5mls). Ted didn't believe him because there hadn't been any clouds in the sky for a month or two, and the forecast didn't mention any rain. True to his word, it rained heavily the next week and Ted could only get out of the dam with a power-winch. He began another dam in a separate area but that was washed out as well. So how did Walty know it was going to rain? He had noticed a Wild Lilly had bloomed. They can stay dry for 6 – 12 months and bloom a week before rain. Its stem is 1 foot high, with a bulb like an onion, and has a yellow flower. It is very toxic.

Walty was always a busy man, rarely ill, either mustering and/or crutching sheep, going around the fences to ensure they were in good condition, and also checking the water in the tanks and dams. It was a sad day when Walty went up to the big dam that was a couple of miles from the homestead. He was checking the windmill when the Land Rover plunged down into the dam drowning his sheepdogs. One of them, Scotty, was a brilliant dog. He would go and get a mob of sheep and all Walty had to do was signal with his hand to tell Scotty what he wanted done with them.

Pernatty Pastoral Company bought Corunna Station, which is across from Iron Knob, in the early 1980s and younger son Graham, wife Margaret, and family moved in and are still there today.

At one time Colin thought he might become a church minister but it didn't last for long, Pernatty was too much in his blood. He too, went through the highs and lows of looking after sheep and cattle, with the vagaries of the weather. He too, loved the hard rigours of life the property threw up. Often, when the station vehicles broke down, he was the one to fix them. Like his father, he knew vehicle and pumping engines inside out. There was rarely a problem Colin could not fix.

When Walty died, Colin owned Pernatty jointly with his son, Leslie. The drought was persistent however, and sheep numbers were dwindling. By 2007, Colin was diagnosed with cancer. On one of his stays at the Ashford Hospital, I had ventured to his room. It was shearing time at Pernatty and he was upset. This was supposed to be his 60th consecutive year of shearing at Pernatty and he was going to miss it. However, he did get back in time to be a part of it. He made it to his 75th birthday, and to have 61 consecutive years with shearing.

Apart from living in Port Augusta for a number of years in his twenties, and of course high school, Leslie had lived most of his life on Pernatty. The decision for both Colin and Leslie was a difficult one to make, as it would take about two or three years to build the flock up again, and all the maintenance that could not be done throughout the drought, needed to be fixed or renewed. Colin died on the 12th November 2009. It was a short ownership for Leslie as the sale went through and he then moved onto another property.

I have not mentioned Mildred, Walty's wife, much as I do not know her history, but she was a quiet woman. Whenever I went over to the House she would be humming to herself, always cheerful, and on hand should any help be needed.

Her father Jack Robins can be seen dancing near the end of the film 'Kangaroo', made in part in the Flinders Ranges, and at Corraberra Station. One of her brothers Allan worked on Pernatty as well. She died at Pernatty in May 1981, with Walty and Colin driving her to Port Augusta for burial at Stirling North Cemetery.



Grandma (Cora) Henderson, Mum (Ina), Grandma (Mildred) French 1957

Then there was Ina, Colin's wife and my mother. Her mother and father, Cora and Peter Henderson had six children and had a farm on the Yadnarie Plains outside of Cleve, selling it in 1951 and moved to Penwortham for awhile. They moved, eventually, to Holmes St, Willaston, where the wedding reception for Ina and Colin was held. In the 1960s Cora and Peter finally moved to Eighteenth St, Gawler. Peter had been curator of the Gawler Bowling Club until 1969 when he died of cancer. Cora lived until 1980. Ina had Beth in 1950, Leslie in 1960, Elaine 1964, and Roy in 1966. Both Ina and Colin joined the Port Augusta Pistol Club, enjoying many years of friendship. Ina was heavily involved in the Women's Auxiliary of the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Port Augusta, was President during the 1980s, and with Colin's help and assistance, put on yearly dances at the

Wilkinson's Kootaberra woolshed, to raise funds for it. They were quite successful. Ina died in November 1990 and buried at Stirling North Cemetery.



Colin & Ina French above and children (Roy, Elaine, Leslie at back, & Beth).





Mildred & Walty French 1972

So that is the story of Pernatty Station with great-grandparents, grandparents and parents', giving the longest continuous ownership that Pernatty has had under the one family of 83 years. If great-great-grandfather William Henry Greenfield of South Gap is included, then it is 104 years.

This began as my Masters thesis at the University of Adelaide in 2006, but when Dad (Colin) died, I withdrew. I still remember Agnes and Walter with fondness. Agnes wouldn't put up with any nonsense from anyone. She seemed to be a magnet for children, there were plenty of grandchildren at Pernatty. I needed a wheelchair so she went out and bought one. Walter was an astute man and took an interest in whatever a person did or said. I must admit it has been an incredible journey, both living in the outback, feeling sometime that we were the only people on Earth, looking up into the night sky that was lit by millions of stars, and writing about my family.

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